MAKERS OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

RUMI

Annemarie Schimmel

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MAKERS OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

Series editor: Farhan A. Nizami

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Rumi

Annemarie Schimmel

translated from the German by Paul Bergne

Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies

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Editor's note

In this book, there is a significant departure from the conventions for this series that needs an explanation.

The late Professor Annemarie Schimmel visited and presented a seminar at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies in Trinity Term 1999. In it, as I recall, she emphasized the Persian literary tradition and the Islamic framework that inform Rumi's writings. She was, in her typically gentle way, sceptical of the popular cult which interprets and presents Rumi's poetry as if it 'transcends' (that is, does not need to be understood in relation to) its religious and cultural inspiration. After this seminar I invited Professor Schimmel to do an essay on Rumi for the 'Makers of Islamic Civilization' series. She was then finishing a short book on Rumi in German which might be adapted for the purpose – it was published by Herder Spektrum in 2001 as *Rumi: Meister der Spiritualität.*

Some years later, we approached Herder for consent to translate the book for the 'Makers' series. Permission was duly given, for which we are most grateful to Herder and, in particular, Francesca Bressan. I commissioned the

translation from Paul Bergne, who was familiar with Rumi's work and the relevant languages. Paul toiled away at the task through an illness that severely impaired his vision and which was, sadly, to prove fatal. At this point we had only a draft of his rendering of the Foreword and the first four chapters, roughly half the work.

It was several years later that I was able to persuade my colleague, Jamil Qureshi, to complete the translation. In view of the circumstances, Herder graciously renewed our contract. As Dr Qureshi pointed out to me, Schimmel quotes extensively from Rumi without, as she has so meticulously done in her other publications, providing references. Since our contract with Herder expressly disallows additions or alterations to the original, the only way to get around this difficulty was, after locating the references from Schimmel's own, other works on Rumi, to present them separately from the main text. That is the reason for the addition of the chapter 'Notes', on pp. 108–17 of this work. Dr Qureshi informs me that only some half a dozen citations could not be confidently traced in Schimmel's other writings; there are, in addition, about the same number of references (not searched in those other works but needed and useful here), which are shown within square brackets, the normal convention to indicate interpolation.

As this book represents a distillation of the thoughts of the last century's leading Western expert on Rumi, I hope that the unexpectedly long struggle to get it out in English will be judged worthwhile. I am most grateful for the patience and perseverance of all those who enabled it finally to happen.

Farhan Nizami

Foreword

In the middle of November 1954 – I had just taken up the chair in the History of Religion in the University of Ankara – I received an enquiry from Mehmet Önder, the director of the Mevlevi Museum in Konya. Could I give a lecture in Turkish on 17 December in Konya at a celebration of the anniversary of the death of Mawlana (pronounced in Turkish, *Mevlana*) Jalaluddin Rumi? There was nothing I would rather have done. After all, I had been interested in Rumi's poetry since I was a young girl, and had already translated a large number of his poems. Even before my mother and I boarded the bus to Konya I could imagine the dervishes dancing and whirling like large white butterflies to a heavenly musical accompaniment. 'Vain dreams!' I thought. In 1925 Ataturk had closed all religious institutions, and shut down the dervish convents. The centuries-old tradition of *sama*ᶜ (in Turkish – *sema*; literally 'to hear') and thence: 'the whirling dance' had disappeared.

Late in the evening of 15 December I was taken to an old house in Konya in whose broad entrance hall a group of elderly men were busy unpacking strange parcels. Dervish headgear – the high brown hats – emerged, alongside broad white garments. Instruments were also unpacked; Halil Jan,

whom I already knew from Istanbul, took out his flute and a few minutes later the *sema* began! For the first time in 29 years the old dervishes were meeting again, to dance together in a ring in the manner instituted by Sultan Valad, Rumi's eldest son, at the beginning of the thirteenth century. And on the very anniversary of the great mystic's death, the 17 December, the *sema* was celebrated in public for the first time. The inhabitants of Konya were happy and enthusiastic. However, on the last day of the festivities, when a *sema* was held in the Mevlana's mausoleum – on the very spot where it had been held for centuries – and the circle was to be filmed, the shoot never took place. No one knew how, but the film material was destroyed, was lost, perhaps in order that the old tradition should remain nothing more than a memory.

Of course, since that day, Mevlevis can be seen every year doing the *sema* on 17 December (and often in the stadium or other not particularly religious venues). These performances attract large numbers of people who are carried away by the fascinating music and the whirling dance. But the magic of that first *sema* in Konya cannot be repeated. After all, it was celebrated by men from the most varied parts of Turkey; they had come from Erzurum, from Istanbul, from Afyon Karahisar, and from Edirne; men who, when young, had gone through the 1001 days of preparation for the life of the dervish, during which the aspirant was 'cooked' stage by stage in the teachings and Persian poetry of the Master and learned the difficult art of the *sema*. However attractive the *sema* might be when performed in both East and West by Turkish, and also by Western, followers of the Mevlana, the danger is undeniable that it could degenerate into a sort of theatrical performance instead of a rite born of deep inner experience.

The number of Europeans and Americans attracted by the whirling dance is growing and, year by year, Rumi's name is becoming better known outside the Islamic world. In the Islamic East however, Mevlana Rumi has been the favourite mystic poet since the late thirteenth century.

His poetical didactic work, the *Mathnavi*, which comprises some 26,000 verses, was described by the Persian poet Jami (d. 1492) as the 'Qur'an in the Persian tongue' and was for many believers, from the Balkans to India, in Iran and Central Asia, the most important work after the Qur'an.

In Ottoman Turkey, artists, musicians, and calligraphers loved the work and it was the right of the *çelebi*, the successor of Mevlana in Konya, to gird the Ottoman Sultan with his sword.

Translations of the *Mathnavi* have been made into every regional language possible. There is hardly a work of Persian poetry in which references to Mevlana's poetry are not to be found. The Indian Muslim poet–philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938) regarded him as his 'Khidr', his spiritual guide;[1] while the Turkish Communist poet Nazim Hikmet (d. 1963) confesses in his early works: 'I too am your disciple, O Hazrat-i Mevlana."[2]

And did Hugo von Hofmannsthal not write in his *in memoriam* for 'Sebastian Melmoth', in a slight adaptation of Rückert's Rumi translation of 1820:

> In the wonderful words of Jalaluddin Rumi, deeper than anything: 'he who knows the force of the "circle", does not fear death, for he knows how love can kill.'[3]

Rumi's message, however deeply rooted in the Islamic tradition, has universal validity, since his work has many aspects, all of which have the overwhelming experience of God's love as their foundation. Thus Iqbal, in his answer

(*javab;* published in Persian in Lahore in 1923[4]) to Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan*, places Mevlana and Goethe together in paradise and has them agreeing on Mevlana's verse: 'Intelligence (cunning) from Satan, love from Adam.'[5]

Indeed, many would agree with Yahya Kemal (d. 1958), Turkey's last classical poet, when he writes:

Flute, carrying the cry of learning of his poetry to the
heavens:
We share Mevlana's breath until the Day of Judgement.
Full of yearning for Tabriz's sun,
In the whirling dance we become Mevlana's wing,
We are Mevlana's spring.[6]

Annemarie Schimmel
Bonn, 30 September 2000

1

Life and work

In recent years Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi has become a real cult figure in American colleges. Poems taken from translations of often misunderstood fragments of his magnificent oeuvre sell like hot cakes, because they have an obvious appeal for those seeking a religiosity free from formalism and based on feeling. 'Sufi Dance' – an attempt to imitate the mystic circle – is the latest craze.

But what do these Rumi fans understand of the great mediaeval master for whom all disorder, everything that was without meaning in the broadest sense of the word, was anathema?

I fear, very little. Above all, most Western Rumi readers and enthusiasts lack a solid understanding of his life, his theology, his poetic art, indeed of the whole cultural background to his poetry, which cannot be correctly understood without a thorough understanding of the mediaeval Islamic world, the development of Sufism, not to mention the rules of Persian poetry.

Who was Jalaluddin, who is known in the West as *Rumi* as he spent the greater part of his life in Anatolia, the

formerly Byzantine, Roman region – whence *Rum* – but who in Iran and the eastern parts of the Islamic world is known as *Balkhi* after his birthplace, Balkh, in modern Afghanistan? His sobriquet of 'Mevlana' (in the Turkish pronunciation; 'our master' or 'lord'), indicates his role as a spiritual teacher. Jalaluddin was born, unless all the sources are misinformed, on 30 September 1207 in Balkh, a prosperous town which was almost completely destroyed a few years later by Genghis Khan's Mongols storming in from the north-east. His father, Baha-i Valad, was a preacher who spent many years as a teacher north of the Oxus. He left us a most fascinating work in Persian in which he attempted to set down his mystical experiences and ideas. His belief in *maʿiyya* or 'withness' (i.e., the absolute, indeed tangible, proximity of the Divine Being), led him to write down things that have prompted modern translators of his work to replace his sometimes indecent formulations with blanks. It was the great achievement of the Basler Islam scholar Fritz Meier (d. 1998) to have been the first to give us an insight into the fascinating, if occasionally shocking, thoughts of Baha-i Valad.

The family seems to have moved to Samarkand around 1210: Jalaluddin speaks as an eye-witness of the Khwarizm Shah's siege of the city in 1213. Later – the exact date is not known – they left the city and set off westwards. It is not clear whether they emigrated for personal reasons or to escape the Mongol threat. The only certainty is that Baha-i Valad with his family and a group of friends next moved to Nishapur where the great Persian poet Fariduddin ʿAttar (d. *ca.* 1221) was living. It is not clear whether he really did bless the young Jalaluddin, since the family's journey has been embellished by hagiographers with numerous details

as miraculous as they are improbable. They then travelled via Makka to Syria where they stayed a while. Jalaluddin was interested in classical Arabic poetry and seems to have spent some time studying there. Their stay was however not long. They moved on into eastern Anatolia to Karaman (Laranda) in central Anatolia. Jalaluddin's mother died there in 1225; the faithful still visit her modest mausoleum. In Karaman, the eighteen-year-old Jalaluddin married a compatriot who had also joined the stream of refugees from Samarkand. His first son was born in 1226 and was given the name of Jalaluddin's grandfather, Sultan Valad. Two years later the family moved on to Konya where the ruler was the Seljuk sultan, ʿAlaʾuddin Kaikobad. Jalaluddin's second son was named after him.

Konya – the ancient Iconium of the New Testament's *Acts* – had become a refuge for Muslims trying to flee from the Mongols, who since 1220 had been laying waste the Eastern Islamic lands. Sultan ʿAlaʾuddin, whom Konya has to thank for the great mosque on the fortress hill as well as numerous madrasas, happily gave refuge to the faithful. His province developed into a centre of mystical thought and teaching. After all, Khorasan, the eastern region of the Islamic empire, had since ancient times been a centre of religious activity and Islamic mysticism or Sufism. The refugees from Khorasan thus enriched the cultural life of their new home. The ageing Baha-i Valad became a professor at one of the numerous madrasas in Konya and, when he died in 1231, Jalaluddin succeeded him as instructor.

As far as is known, up until then, the young man had hardly shown any interest in mystic piety. He was interested in traditional theology and jurisprudence and in the verses of the greatest of Arab poets, Mutanabbi (d. 965). It is not

known to what extent he had taken in his father's writings by the time the old man died. However, after his death, one of his disciples, Burhanuddin Muhaqqiq, came to Konya looking for his teacher. He began to introduce Jalaluddin to his father's work and also taught him to study the first great verse work to deal with Sufism. This was Sana'i's *Hadiqat al-haqiqa* (The Garden of Truth). Sana'i (d. 1131) had lived in Ghazni, in today's Afghanistan, the town where Firdawsi (d. 1020) had written the massive *Shahnameh*, Iran's first great epic, at the beginning of the eleventh century. Sana'i, who lived a century later, was the master of complicated poetic forms. He was the first to compose a *mathnavi*, a long poem in rhyming couplets in which he wove together theological and mystical thought, enriched with a pinch of panegyric, into anecdotes and wise adages. This mystical-didactic epic became the prototype of a whole literary genre which became popular in the ensuing centuries throughout the Persian-speaking world and also in the Turkic area. Jalaluddin seems to have held Sana'i's lyric and epic work in affectionate esteem. In his later work one repeatedly comes across quotations from the Ghaznavid poet's works. In a small poem Rumi develops in his own style the elegy Sana'i wrote for his own death:

> It was said 'Sana'i lives no more!'
> The death of such a man is hard to bear.
> He was not straw to be carried off by the wind,
> Nor water that froze in the cold,
> Nor a comb that broke in the hair,
> Nor a grain compressed by the earth.
> He was a golden treasure, hidden in sand.
> For he recognized the two worlds as small grains.[7]

It seems that Jalaluddin's teacher initiated him into all aspects of Sufism, that he perhaps even sent him once to Syria to meet Sufis there. But the decade after Baha-i Valad's death is barely documented. Burhanuddin left Konya in 1240 and settled in Kaisari. His modest tomb lies at the foot of the majestic Erciyas mountain.

Although Anatolia had been relatively peaceful at the time the refugees from Khorasan arrived, after the death of Sultan ʿAlaʾuddin in 1235 tensions developed. The Mongols had conquered a whole series of eastern Anatolian cities and were playing a central role in politics. The Seljuk rulers had more or less fallen under the control of power-hungry ministers. Moreover, strange dervishes thronged the country's roads. Often dressed in animal furs and with iron rings in their arms and ears, these men were far removed from the classical Sufi tradition. The conservative-minded faithful looked on in dismay as the general situation deteriorated.

It was in this time of political and spiritual turmoil that Jalaluddin had the experience which transformed him into the unsurpassed proponent of the experience of mystical love. On 30 October 1244 he met the wandering dervish Shamsuddin (The Sun of Faith) or Shams-i Tabriz, who, according to the tradition, put a question to him of such challenging force that he fainted from shock. As though struck by a thunderbolt, his soul caught fire and everything he had learned in the years of spiritual training fused into his love for the dervish who seems to have been roughly his contemporary:

> Your dream image was in our breast
> We sensed the sun from the light of dawn.[8]

He spent weeks locked away alone with him discussing the secrets of divine love. His family and his students were horrified. Eventually Shamsuddin sensed that it would probably be better if he were to leave Konya. He disappeared secretly and it was his disappearance that turned Rumi into a poet. He did not know what was happening to him. He listened to music, whirled around in ecstatic dance and recited verses. He who had never before been concerned with Persian poetry, sang as though he himself were a musical instrument.

> Since the spark of love entered my heart
> Its fire devoured all else.
> I set aside books and intellect,
> And learnt poetry, songs and chorals.[9]

Short Arabic poems were amongst them and he tried, with ever newer phrases, to express his love but, to start with, without naming the beloved, until he heard how all nature responded to his singing:

> I am not alone who sings 'Shamsuddin' and 'Shamsuddin'.
> No. The nightingale in the garden and the partridge
> on the mountainside!
> The day full of brightness: 'Shamsuddin'; and the
> spinning heaven, 'Shamsuddin'.
> Mountain of jewels: 'Shamsuddin' and 'Shamsuddin'
> is day and night.[10]

He also searched after where the lost one could possibly be. Finally Shams was sighted in Damascus. How well the name Damascus (Dimishq) rhymed with the word for love (*ʿishq*)! Sultan Valad, by then twenty years old, was sent to fetch Shams. He brought him back and, in one of his works, described with these words the renewed encounter between

his father and Shams: 'Neither knew which was the lover and which the beloved.'[11]

Shams stayed in his friend's house as a guest and was married to a girl, Kimiya, who had been raised in the family and whom he loved dearly but who died shortly afterwards. However, hostility towards the 'intruder' grew once more, both in the family and among Rumi's circle of friends. On 5 December, Shams was called out of the house and never returned. It seems likely that he was murdered and thrown into a well behind the house, where later the memorial mosque, the Maqami-i Shams, was built, and beneath which the large grave dating from the time of the Seljuks can be found. No admirer of Mevlana would miss the chance of visiting the place. It seems certain that Rumi's son was involved in the plot. From then on he was no longer regarded as a member of the family.

Jalaluddin surely knew what had happened but hoped against hope that he would find Shams again. He even set off for Damascus. However, by then an inner change had taken place and he finally found him in himself 'shining like the moon'.[12]

Is it not so that he who has trodden all paths in his search for God, ends by finding the object of his divine love in his own heart? The poems that still poured forth in a seemingly unstoppable flow do not bear the name of Jalaluddin but of Shamsuddin. It had been customary since time immemorial for a poet to weave his name into the end of a poem. So it was that the name of Shams-i Tabriz appears at the end of hundreds of ghazals, since there was no longer any difference between Jalaluddin and his lost friend.

After this passionate experience the master's heart was in need of rest. He found this peace in his friendship with

the simple goldsmith, Salahuddin Zarkub, whom he got to know in 1235. It is said that the noise of the goldsmith's little hammer sent Jalaluddin into ecstasy, to such an extent that he took Salahuddin and whirled with him through the narrow streets. This may be true, but the goldsmith did not draw him into a corrosive passion; rather, he acted for him like a mirror in whose presence he could sort out his experiences and become calmer. The poems now written under the name of his quiet friend no longer soar to the heights of those of the first period, although they are always very moving. In order to tie Salahuddin even closer to his circle of friends, Mevlana married his son Sultan Valad to Salahuddin's daughter Fatima. The letters he wrote to his beloved daughter-in-law show how much he loved her and always defended her even against his own son.

In the middle of the 1250s Konya was visited by a series of misfortunes. Salahuddin fell ill, probably with cancer. The Mongols, who had already occupied all of eastern Anatolia, once more laid siege to the town which, as recorded in the hagiographies, was only saved from an even worse fate by Rumi's prayers. It was a planned attack by the Mongols which hints at a new development in Mevlana's life. In a poem dated 26 November 1256, there appears – for the first time explicitly – the name of Husamuddin Çelebi. Husamuddin belonged to Rumi's most intimate circle of disciples and Shamsuddin had been very fond of the well-educated young man. As an exemplarily attentive pupil he became very close to Mevlana. It is related that one day he asked the master to compose a didactic poem so that his disciples would not always have to rely on the works of Sanaʾi and ʿAttar. At that Rumi immediately recited the first 18 verses of the great poem which is known today as the *Mathnavi*.

Listen to the reed of the flute how it tells
And how it complains, tormented by the pain of parting.
'Since I was cut from the reed-bed that was my home,
All the world weeps with my music.
I seek a heart, broken by the pain of separation,
To tell him of the suffering of parting.'[13]

The great didactic work then began to take on the form that would, in the course of the years, reach more than 25,000 verses. To start with, Husamuddin tried to prise out of his master the secret of love; urged him to speak frankly about his experience. But Mevlana rebuffed him:

Let none disclose the friend's secret –
Listen to the content of stories;
The secret of the friend is best told
In legends and sagas of days gone by.[14]

This gives the tone of the *Mathnavi*. All the stories, parables, and anecdotes told by Rumi in the following years up to his death in 1273 are no more than allegories for the indescribable secret surrounding the all-devouring love for Shamsuddin. At the very end, Mevlana hints at this secret when he speaks of Zulaykha who hides the name of Joseph in every utterance she makes. In the same way, every poem in the *Mathnavi* subsumes the beloved 'Shams'.

The work's structure, insofar as one can speak of structure at all, appears illogical. Just as in the Islamic art of the arabesque, the spiralling forked tendril, blossom and leaf unfold from one another in never-ending combinations, so it is in the poems of the *Mathnavi*. Sometimes indeed Mevlana seems to lose his thread, to allow himself to be carried along by word association, until some impatient listener interjects:

We have strayed far from the right way.
Turn round, O master. Where is our landing?[15]

It is just this characteristic of the *Mathnavi* which makes translation so extremely difficult.

With Salahuddin's death in 1258, when Husamuddin's wife also died, the composition of the *Mathnavi* was halted for four years at the end of the first volume. Then the dictation recommenced. Husamuddin, who at the start had been an inquisitive young man, had by now matured and Mevlana gave him the honourable title of '*ziya al-haqq*'. '*Ziya*' means 'light'. Thus he becomes a ray of the 'Light of Truth'.

For the Islamic world the year 1258 also spelt the end of an era. The ʿAbbasid Caliphate in Baghdad, which at least in theory had been the centre of the Islamic world (there had been alternative caliphates in both Egypt and Andalusia) since the year 750, was destroyed by Genghis Khan's grandson Hulagu. Immense convulsions led to the emergence of new political systems in the devastated central and eastern lands.

While Mevlana was dictating his *Mathnavi* he did not neglect his other tasks. He taught his students. He often met leading politicians. The records of fragments of conversations, which were assembled as *Fihi ma fihi*,[16] show how he tried to give spiritual guidance even to ministers like Muʿinuddin Parvana despite being unhappy with the latter's vacillating policies. There were also women in his circle, not only the wives of high dignitaries but also simple women, not all of them from respectable backgrounds. His numerous letters to rich men show how he stood up for the poor or warned the rich always to pay for goods promptly, trying always, if possible, to act as mediator. Did the poor fatherless boy, thrown onto the street by his stepfather, not also deserve

help? The study of Mevlana's prose works gives us a clear insight into his practical religiosity.

Despite all the political disturbances, Konya remained a point of attraction for those of a mystical predisposition. Mevlana's most important neighbour was Sadruddin Qunavi, stepson of the great religious scholar Ibn ʿArabi who originated from Murcia in Spain and had died in Damascus. From the late thirteenth century onwards, Ibn ʿArabi's colossal prose works in Arabic were to exert a profound influence on the mysticism of the Islamic world: his *Fusus al-hikam* – 'The Bezels of Wisdom' – an anthology of prophecy, is a work which even today remains controversial and difficult to interpret. This is even truer of the comprehensive *al-Futuhat al-Makkiya* – 'The Makkan Revelations' – a colossal world review which, as the writer acknowledges, developed out of a vision in the holy city of Makka and embraces all aspects of theology and theosophy (in the classical sense of the word). According to one story, Rumi is said to have preferred the *'Futuhat-i Zaki'* – 'The revelations of (the musician) Zaki' – to the immensely learned work of the Andalusian with which he had almost certainly become acquainted through Sadruddin. Indeed, especially in the third and fourth book, numerous passages of the *Mathnavi* seem to echo Ibn ʿArabi's thinking. One can imagine how he may have listened to the learned words of his neighbour in order to incorporate them in poetic form into his own work. But colourless theorizing did not appeal to him, and at one point in his work he complains that the intellectuals of Konya disparaged him for telling stories about the past, and not composing theoretical analyses of the levels and stages of Sufism.

About the same time as Mevlana's family did, Najmuddin Daya Razi arrived in Anatolia. His work *Mirsad al-ʿibad* (The

Watchtower of the Servants of God) – dedicated to the Seljuk ruler, ʿAlaʾuddin – was used for centuries in the education of Sufis in the Persian-speaking world. Later, Fakhruddin ʿIraqi (d. 1289) also came, who had spent years in Multan and has left us charming love poetry as well as elegant little theoretical tracts explaining Ibn ʿArabi's theosophy. It is also possible, to judge by a reference in one of his Turkish poems, that the Turkish folk-singer Yunus Emre once visited Konya during Mevlana's lifetime. In Rumi's time small groups of Sufis were formed in Anatolia, like that of Emre, which brought the teachings of Sufism to the people in simple form – instead of complicated classical Persian poetry – straightforward four-line verses which simplified the spread of Sufi thought. Mevlana had already woven Turkish and even Greek verses into his Persian poetry. His son Sultan Valad even left behind a collection of Turkish poetry.

Konya was a centre of the most varied religious traditions and different languages. All this is reflected in Mevlana's works. He knew the Christian monks – Cappadocia had been, since earliest Christian times, a stronghold of piety tinged with mysticism (Gregory of Natsiants, Gregory the Great, etc.). Indeed, it is legitimate to ask whether some of Rumi's religious hymns might not have been a little influenced by Byzantine folk lyric. Turkish was the language spoken by ordinary people; Persian was the language of administration and of high literature throughout the eastern Islamic world; Arabic was used by theologians. Mevlana knew the different languages, and the different religious sects and their practices.

All this is reflected in his poetry – albeit often in disjointed form. Often he was unable to conclude his poems. The last book (the sixth) has no proper ending. As he himself says in a frequently quoted verse: 'I was raw, I cooked, I burned.'

In the summer of 1273 he fell ill. The doctors were unable to diagnose the sickness and, at sundown on 17 December 1273, he departed for his eternal rest, consoling his friends with the thought that death, of which he had so often sung, is not a separation but a reunion.

When they on the day of death
Lower me into the earth,
You must not think then
My heart remains on earth.
In carrying my bier, take care
The word 'separation' is unheard,
For it is then that everlasting
reunion and finding are mine.
Nor cry 'Farewell, O farewell!'
When I am led to the grave:
There for me is a blessed arrival
Prepared behind the curtain.[17]

The followers of all religious communities accompanied the catafalque at his funeral. It is said that a dervish *sema* was organized. Above his grave was erected that structure which is known as *yesil kubbe* or *al-qubbat al-khudra* – the 'green dome'. Beneath it not only Mevlana, but his father and numerous disciples and followers lie buried. His cat is also there which died a week after he did – buried, it is said, by his daughter. After all, following the message of the Qur'an, he had recognized all creatures as worshippers of God.

His successor as teacher of the disciples was Husamuddin. Sultan Valad held back for the third time. He who had brought his father's first friend back home and had married the daughter of his father's second friend, now handed over the succession to the third friend, taking over responsibility for the disciples only after Husamuddin's death in 1289. In

the years that followed, he codified the Order's rules and regulated the training of the disciples, who were to serve for 1001 days before they could become fully-fledged Mevlevis. He also gave a formal organization to the *sema*, the whirling circle, which in Mevlana's time had always come to pass spontaneously. From then on the *sema* was to become a work of art, that would begin with the threefold greeting of the master and, in four phases of whirling, symbolize man's approach to the Divine, before ending the ritual with the long-drawn-out *huuu* (He) and the blessing.

When the dervishes, dressed in their broad white robes and wearing their high conical felt hats, spin anti-clockwise on their left foot, their right hand is held out to heaven, to receive the grace of God, while their left hand, turned downwards, passes this grace on to the world. Thus the *sema* also acts as a symbol of Rumis's work, he who received divine grace in full and, through his poetry and teaching, passed it on to those who were willing to understand and whole-heartedly to hear the eternal divine music and feel the perfume of God's love.

Mevlana's poetical work

In a remarkable passage of his prose collection *Fihi ma fihi*, Mevlana – he must have been in his early fifties – said that he only wrote poetry to entertain his friends, for:

> Why else should I write poetry? By God, I have no illusions about poetry; I can't think of anything worse – as though someone would dip his hands in tripe and then wash them; if the guest feels like eating tripe he has to do that. . .
> Indeed, had he stayed at home, he would have occupied himself with science, which is so much more noble than poetry.[18]

Who could expect such words from one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of mystical poets in the lands of Islam?

Writing poetry came upon him like a shock. 'It was a huge urge' he once wrote, for love loosened his tongue. 'That one, that Turk' breathed in him and made him speak – 'split open (his) mouth'.[19] But, however little he concerned himself with poetry for poetry's sake, one should not forget that a knowledge of poetry and rhetorical forms was, in the Islamic Middle Ages (and even up to modern times), an indispensable part of the education of any cultured person.

Classical Arabic poetry, especially that of the great pre- and early-Islamic period, inspired innumerable people; and even the great mystics of the Middle Ages held strictly to the rules of traditional Arabic poetry. The love poems of Ibn ʿArabi in his *Tarjuman al-ashwaq* ('Interpreter of the senses') are, like the wonderful verses of his contemporary Ibn al-Farid (d. 1235) in Egypt, timeless in their rhetorical elaboration. Only after long philosophical commentary could they be interpreted as the expression of mystical love. That Mevlana had a special preference for the greatest classical poet of the Arabs, the mighty Mutanabbi (d. 965), is easy to see from the references to and quotations from the great man's poetry in many of his works, although, as will be explained, Shams-i Tabriz tried to turn his friend away from secular poetry of this sort.

It is clear from his way of arguing that Mevlana was well-acquainted with classical Arabic Sufi literature. The brief and useful little handbook of Sufism, the *Risala* of al-Qushayri (d. 1074) appears in the *Mathnavi*. Did Noah not reach the ripe old age of 900 without reading the *Risala*? writes the poet, slightly mocking those who tended to rely exclusively on the written word.[20] Al-Ghazali's (d. 1111) comprehensive work, *Ihya' ʿulum al-din* ('The Revival of the Sciences of Religion'), for centuries the standard work on moderate mysticism, was of particular importance for Mevlana. Numerous stories from that work make their appearance in the *Mathnavi* dressed in poetic form. The clear, somewhat sober language of al-Ghazali, the 40 divisions of whose work contain little else beside the instruction of man in the correct attitude to death, appealed to Rumi much more than the airy-fairy speculations about the creation and the levels of existence, about the perfect man and mystical prophetology to be found in Ibn ʿArabi's works.

Sufism or Sufi thought (from the Arabic word '*suf* for wool, taken from the simple robes of the believers), which arose in the eighth century from a strictly ascetic movement, had been transformed into genuine mysticism by the concept of love for God. It was a woman from Basra, Rabi'a (d. 801), who introduced this concept into gloomy asceticism. Women have always played an important role in all mystic movements. The first verses in Arabic describing the love for God are attributed to her. Over the course of the succeeding centuries a Sufi literature developed which reached its high point in the lyrics of the mystic-martyr Hallaj, who was cruelly put to death in Baghdad in 922. His poem,

> Kill me, O my friends,
> For only in death is my life.
> For me life is only death,
> My life lies in dying.[21]

is quoted repeatedly in Rumi's lyrics and in his *Mathnavi*, sometimes in surprising contexts.

Around the same time, in the early tenth century, with the appearance of the New Persian language, Persian poetry developed. It was in the Persian world that a new, richly artistic lyric evolved, which adopted the syllabic metres of Arabic poetry but was much more colourful in its imagery. To start with it was the quatrain, the *ruba'i* , probably based on a pre-Islamic Iranian form, which became the vehicle for mystic poetry. Short love-poems in Arabic were already being sung in the tenth century by Sufis at musical gatherings in Baghdad. The same is probably also true of Iran. Rumi's first works of poetry are clearly quatrains in which he expresses in classical imagery his transformation from ascetic to loving singer.

Over time, the short secular-love lyric, the ghazal, with its single rhyme running throughout (and which was introduced into German literature in 1820 by Friedrich Rückert) began to be used not only as an expression of earthly love but as a device whose charm arises from the uncertainty as to whether the beloved is an earthly or a heavenly being. Around the first millennium, Sufis had realized that divine beauty is reflected everywhere or penetrates everything. Love for an earthly being is a 'metaphorical love' which leads to genuine spiritual love, for, as the Arab proverb goes, 'The metaphor is the bridge to truth'. It is this double meaning which gives to the Persian lyric and the Turkish lyric influenced by it their particular charm. Here the age-old and much-debated question as to whether the poems of Hafiz (d. 1388 or 1389) describe real experience or are to be understood metaphorically simply becomes otiose. 'Can anything exist through which God cannot be recognized?' ask the Sufis. The created world is like a veil which masks reality because the created being's eye is too weak to perceive unveiled reality:

> In the garden a thousand fine adorable things
> And roses and violets with pure scents
> And plashing water running in the stream:
> This is all a screen – it is He alone.[22]

One should always keep this intentional ambiguity in mind when discussing the content of the best Persian lyric poetry. Moreover, neither Persian nor Turkish grammar differentiates between masculine and feminine. The beloved can be either male or female but, especially in later poetry, references to the 'first appearance of the beard' make the gender fairly clear. At the same time one should not forget, in this context, that the soul of the poet and more particularly that of the mystic, is mostly conceived of as feminine: as

Zulaykha yearns for Joseph (Qur'an, sura 12), so yearns the lover for God. Particularly in Rumi's work one finds many verses in which the feminine component is made clear. One should not overlook the fact that in his imagery of conjugal unity he copies and refines the thinking of his father. Nor should one forget that for mystics, death is celebrated as a 'wedding' – the feminine soul is united with the longed-for divine lover.

Next to the *ruba'i* and the ghazal Persian literature is notable for the *mathnavi* – a long poetic form in rhyming couplets. From Sana'i's *Hadiqat al-haqiqa* the road leads to Fariduddin 'Attar, whose great epics are masterpieces of didactic poetry. His 'Conference of the Birds' (*Mantiq al-tayr*) tells in numerous stories the arduous journey of the Spirit-Birds to find the *Simurgh*, the symbol for God, at the ends of the earth. On arrival the 30 surviving birds (in Persian, *si murgh*) discover that they themselves are identical with the *Simurgh*, the Divinity.

The *Musibatnama*, however, the 'Book of Affliction', describes the seeker's experiences in 40 days of solitude, at the end of which he finds God in the ocean of his own soul – just as Mevlana found Shams in himself.

Persian poetry, which Mevlana made into the vehicle for his own inexpressible experience, is subject to strict rules. The metres of the verses are exactly predetermined and may not be altered in the course of a poem. They have names like *fa'ilatun*, *mufta'ilun*, and so on. No wonder that Mevlana often sighs: 'This *fa'ilatun mufta'ilun* will be the death of me.'[23]

Such was Mevlana's mastery of the rules, that, for all their classical exactitude, one can scan many of his poems simply by clapping one's hands. After all they were created while whirling in the dance, during which the poet no doubt clapped to mark the rhythm.

Like the rhythm, so also the language of imagery, whose rhetorical rules had been fixed for centuries, was strictly predetermined. Among them was, for example, the rule that like images should be employed together. Should a concept from a particular sphere be used, another concept from the same sphere has to be used in the same verse. If one should mention a flower, for example, ideally another plant should also make its appearance. The rose usually demands the appearance of the nightingale. The cypress always grows next to a stream. Should a prophet from the Qur'an be mentioned, either another must follow or at least one of the miracles he wrought. All these relationships can then – at least in mystical poetry – be interpreted in a secular or a spiritual manner. In this way a network of relationships is woven that, in the work of the best poets, time and again attracts our admiration and which may not be disregarded since it is as much part of any work of art as the actual content.

Mevlana is a master in the use of this classical heritage, although the content of his work is often surprising. He has recourse to all sorts of tricks, and as we know that his verses were created spontaneously and were not the result of laborious mental effort, it is astonishing how perfectly he masters both diction and the rules. Above all, it is fascinating to see that, for him, it was not only the classical canon which counted; rather, everything that he saw, heard or felt was for him an indication of divine reality. If ever a poet interpreted the passage of the Qur'an, 'We shall show them Our signs on the horizons and in their souls' (41. 53), it was Rumi. For him everything became a 'sign' pointing to the creative power of God, whether in the external world, on its furthest limits or 'horizons', or in the human soul. Nothing was too small, too slight, to contain an indication of something higher. Just

as the Qur'an takes the helpless fly (2. 26), the feeble spider (29. 41), the humble ant (27. 18) or the divinely-inspired bee (16. 68) as examples of different aspects of God's creative power, so Rumi does likewise. It is this that makes his language so lively, his images so surprising and, despite all apparent paradoxes, so telling.

It is understandable that poets take their imagery from nature. The descriptions of nature in early Persian poetry are often of exquisite beauty – whether one thinks of Firdawsi's descriptions of the dawn, or those of spring in Anwari's or Farrukhi's great *qasida*s. In my view, though, one can best appreciate Rumi's descriptions of nature when one has experienced a spring day in Konya (although that hardly holds true now that it has grown into a city with a million inhabitants). Spring is the best simile for resurrection. When after a night storm in May the city is suddenly clothed in tender green, and laden with the scent of wild olive-blossom, one understands the joyous verses of Mevlana for whom thunder recalls the Last Trump and rain the life-giving grace of God, while the sun thaws out the frozen world of winter and the wind stirs the branches, newly clad in their green robes of paradise:

> When the wind of spring begins to blow,
> Every branch that is not brittle stirs itself for the dance.[24]

But the dry twig, which knows nothing about love, is cut off and cast into the fire, which, according to the Qur'an (sura 111), is just what happened to Abu Lahab's unbelieving wife 'the firewood carrier'. But the flowers dance on the grave of winter and the birds recite their rosary, while the sun, now entering the constellation of Aries, brings its blessing. Mevlana however also knows:

The sun, which illuminates for us the globe –
Should it come too close, will burn up the whole world.[25]

The sun, symbol of the divinity, shows its might as beauty and as force, as tenderness and as a fearsome firebrand. Rumi too could say with the apostle Paul, 'For our God is a consuming fire' (*Hebrews*, 12. 29). He had experienced the life-giving and burning power of this sun in Shamsuddin, the 'sun of faith', of whom he once said:

Your countenance is like the sun, Shamsuddin,
By him the clouds, by you the hearts, are swept along.[26]

As popular belief would have it, the sun also transforms stone hidden in the depths of the mountains into precious ruby. In the same way, the human heart, patiently harbouring its love under the burdens of affliction, is in the end transformed by the divine sun into a jewel.

Rain is, as everywhere in the Islamic world, *rahma*, 'mercy', and thus linked to the Prophet Muhammad, who, according to the Qur'an, was sent as 'mercy for the worlds', *rahmatan li-l -ʿalamin* (Q. 21. 107).

In Rumi's world every animal has a function: whether the lion, which allows itself to be stroked by the true believers, or the cat, which sees to it that 'the mice of unbelief' do not despoil the world. The dog, though ritually unclean, can become a model of fidelity (as is repeatedly stressed particularly by Rumi's predecessor, ʿAttar). The camel is the pious one, which allows its beloved to lead it by the nose-ring, and which can break into dance at the sound of his voice. That camels can be spurred on to a gallop by the voice of the driver is a well-worn theme in literature. Indeed, the lofty camel can even be a symbol of love:

Build for the little hen a house,
The camel cannot fit therein.
The hen is reason, the coop the body;
And the camel the great proud Love![27]

The elephant is the giant beast, indefinable like God. Could a blind man describe more than that part of the elephant that his hands had touched? The elephant is also the human who works in exile until, one night, he dreams of his home in India, bursts his fetters and runs back there.[28] Just as the human can suddenly be struck by the memory of his provenance – the presence of God – and then try to leave the world behind him.

This is the ever-recurring motif in Rumi's poetry. The soul, held captive here in the world, yearns to return to God. But how can the donkey understand and believe what the gentle gazelle, held captive in the same stall, has to tell of the endless expanse of the sweet-smelling prairie, or dream of India which it does not know?[29]

The theme of homesickness also lies behind the story of the falcon. The noble bird of prey is caught, his eyes are covered with a hood, and in the end he thinks no more about where his homeland is. And should he be a trained falcon, he may likewise forget that he once sat on the arm of a king by whom he was honoured. That old crone, the world, that snared him, treats him altogether wrongly :

If you give a white falcon to an aged crone
She'll clip his talons thinking to do him good.
Talons that he needs for livelihood and hunting
This blind hag blindly clips, and asks him then:
'Where's your mother been, your claws have grown
So long?' So she clips the talons, beak and wings,
Foul old hag, meaning thereby a goodly deed.

She cooks him noodle soup, then hotly enraged
As he won't eat, thinks no more of kindness:
'So lovingly I cooked a fine meal for you,
And you, playing high and mighty, disdain
To partake! Punishment indeed is what
You've earned, torment and sore affliction –
Since, with the best of will, none can do you
Any good at all!' Then, offering just the soup
'Come now, if you really don't fancy the fine
Noodles, come, try to drink this at least!'
But, being unused to such, the falcon dislikes
The soup, and the old woman gets angry, indeed
Her anger grows and grows till at last she tips
The hot boiling broth on the falcon's head –
Ow! so all the feathers fall from his crown,
He becomes altogether bald... [30]

But it is not only the falcon that is homesick. The nightingale too yearns for the eternal rose-bush. For in most religions birds are creatures with souls, each with its own character, as so beautifully described by ʿAttar in his *Mantiq al-tayr*. In Mevlana's eyes, the fabled, mysterious homa, whose shadow foretold kingship, stands for the beloved. Next to the falcon, his favourite bird is the parrot or budgerigar, to which he devotes two stories right at the beginning of his *Mathnavi*.[31] In one the intelligent bird, which has spilled some rose-oil, becomes the pattern for a false analogy. In the other, he appears as a seeker, who learns from the example of one of his relatives in India to 'die before death' as enjoined by the Prophet. Such a death saves him from the fetters of this 'mortal coil'. Often the parrot, clad in green, the colour of the Prophet, makes his appearance in the role of a disciple. He learns to speak by being placed in front of a mirror from behind which someone speaks to him. He thus concludes

that the parrot in the mirror is the speaker and tries to copy him just as a disciple should copy his master.

It is only to be expected that the moth, which, driven by a sacred longing, burns itself in the flame, and the unhappy bat[32] which flies at night and cannot know the sun, should both make their appearance in *Mevlana*'s poetry. Even worms can become symbols for how love works.[33]

Admirable as Rumi's limitless fantasy and originality is with regard to the teeming world of animals and plants, his poetic world is even richer. Here children play an important role. Their development, games, growth, and happiness, are repeatedly drawn upon as models for the spiritual development of man (see below, pp. 62–74). Nor is there any shortage of images from everyday life. A hot bath is taken as symbol of heavenly love, as is a quarrel amongst porters who know that they will receive higher wages if they take on a heavier burden. Rumi particularly liked symbolism drawn from the kitchen. Konya was famous for its cooking and especially for its sweetmeats. Mevlana was able to use the most varied dishes as symbols for spiritual nourishment: whether bread or *hummus*, kebab or lamb shank, or delicious sweetmeats. Each one of them can indicate a level of spirituality or a mental experience. On reading Rumi's *Divan* or the *Mathnavi,* the observant reader can put together an entire spiritual menu for mediaeval Konya. Here, more than anything, it is the smell or scent of dishes which gives one an indication of the pot's contents. For the whole subject of smell as the trigger of memories and as infallible source of information plays an important role in Rumi's works:

> There are some who, when they greet one, their greeting emits the scent of musk. There are others from whose greeting comes

the smell of smoke. Anyone whose sense of smell is in order can notice this.[34]

So he writes in *Fihi ma fihi*. Is it not the case that a tanner, used to the stink of tannic acid, sickens on entering the perfume-makers' bazaar, and recovers only when someone puts dog's mess to his nose?

Mevlana's work contains numerous references to historical and especially religio-historical events. The Sufis of the classical period have specific roles. Among them al-Hallaj is mentioned more than any other. This passionate devotee, to whom is ascribed the expression '*ana l-Haqq*', 'I am the Truth' (i.e., God), was cruelly put to death in Baghdad in 922 for having, in the opinion of the orthodox, made himself guilty of 'betraying the secret', inasmuch as he alluded to the possibility of a union of God and man. In fact, his trial had not only religious but also political motives. The parable of the moth which hurls itself into the flame and which became one of the central themes of Persian–Turkish poetry, applies to al-Hallaj. Goethe was inspired by the parable in his concept of 'sacred yearning' (*selige Sehnsucht*), and, although he did not at the time know the source and context of this image, his opening line:

> Tell no man, only the wise man...[35]

takes up the theme of the need to keep the secret of sublime experience. Hallaj's yearning for death, which finds expression in his verse, moved Rumi deeply. No Sufi of the classical period occurs as frequently as the 'martyr of the love of God' in his works.

There was one theme that specially appealed to Mevlana: music and dance. As he spun round and round for hours, carried away by his love for Shams, he imagined himself like an instrument that sings involuntarily when filled with the

breath of the beloved and touched by his hands. It is no coincidence that the *Mathnavi* begins with the 'Song of the Reed' which, touched by the breath of the beloved, hints at the secrets of yearning and the sufferings of love. The musical theme infuses all Mevlana's poetry, in which he imagines himself sometimes as a flute and sometimes as a stringed instrument, and in which, as a small drum, he fears to be smashed by the heavy blows of the drummer.

Music leads to dance. Mevlana saw in the whirling dance the movement which permeates everything – the atom (he uses the expression 'grain of dust', but the simile would suit the atom even better) turns around its own nucleus. And all atoms turn around their sun, held in place by its attractive power. The whirling dance means leaving the gravity of the earth behind and reaching a higher plane of existence. For Mevlana the origin of all things lies in the dance. In a verse which bears the mark of genius, he describes creation as it shows itself in the dance. For at the beginning of time, when God addressed an as-yet uncreated humanity, saying '*a-lastu bi- Rabbikum*', 'Am I not your Lord?', and it replied '*bala*', 'Yes, surely' (Q. 7. 172), His words resounded like music and, in an ecstatic dance, being leapt from non-being:

> A call echoed in non-being, then
> Non-being said 'Surely, yes!
> I will set foot in that land
> To show myself green and fresh'.
> It heard God's primordial call,
> Turned to dancing and trance,
> It was non-being and became being,
> Hearts and tulips and figs![36]

The religious foundations

The poetry of the friends of God is a complete explanation of the mysteries of the Qur'an, for they are annihilated from themselves and subsist through God.[37]

Thus wrote Sultan Valad about his father's work. There is a tendency these days, especially amongst people who regard themselves as 'modern', to try and 'de-Islamize' Mevlana and to represent his teaching as a doctrine that is above all religions. However, with the best will in the world, one can no more interpret Mevlana without knowing his Islamic basis than one can understand Meister Eckhart (d. 1328) or Theresa of Avila (d. 1582) without their Christian background. Not for nothing did Jami (d. 1492) extol the *Mathnavi* as the 'Qur'an in the Persian language'. A careful reading of the great poem shows how strongly Mevlana, with a word here or a phrase there, bases himself on the word of God even in passages that appear totally profane. For him, as for all Muslims, the Qur'an is the pure word of God handed down piecemeal to the Prophet, and it forms the basis of everything. In *Fihi ma fihi* he reproaches a Qur'an cantor

who may have a beautiful voice but does not understand the sense of the text. In a fine piece of imagery he says:

> The Qur'an is a double-sided brocade. Some derive pleasure from one side, others from the other. Both are true and right, for God most high wants both to derive benefit therefrom. In the same way a woman may have a husband and a babe in arms and from each enjoys pleasure differently. The joy from the child lies in her breast and her milk; the joy from her husband in sleep, kissing and embracing. Many people are, on the way, children and milk drinkers – they enjoy the outer meaning of the Qur'an. But those, those who are true men, know a different enjoyment and different understanding of its significance.[38]

One has to be patient in order to see the 'face of the Qur'an', for 'the Qur'an is capable of showing itself in any form it wills'.

Mevlana's theology and his view of the world are nourished by the Qur'an. This is clear from his remarks about ritual obligations like formal prayer and ablutions or about the pilgrimage. His thoughts on prayer especially are among the most important parts of what he has left us.

Besides the Qur'an, numerous hadiths – words either attributed to the Prophet or that tell about him – form an additional foundation for Mevlana's work. Faruzanfar's book *Ahadith-i Mathnavi* contains more than 700 hadiths which are worked in the *Mathnavi*, quite apart from the many contained in the *Divan* or Mevlana's prose works.

Thoughts about God

The praise of God the living, the one who exists through Himself, *al-hayy al-qayyum*, as He is extolled in the Qur'an's Throne Verse (2. 255), pervades the whole of Mevlana's *oeuvre*. It is the living God who has revealed Himself to him, not some *prima causa*, some basic principle who originally created the world but has since withdrawn. No, He willed to reveal Himself through His infinite splendour, to be recognized and loved, as Rumi hints (like countless other Sufis) through a divine saying that falls outside the Qur'an: 'I was a hidden treasure that willed to be known; so I created the world.' For everything longs to show its beauty and power. The scholar desires to show off his learning, the artist his skill, while beauty would like to be loved for herself alone. Even if God were to manifest Himself without anyone or anything bearing witness to that, He would still long to show His mercy, to reveal himself to the seeker as *al-rahman al-rahim*, 'the Merciful the Mercy-giving'.

God is, as the Qur'an says (50. 16), closer to man than his own neck vein, and His signs are visible everywhere. Rumi is the great interpreter of the Qur'anic words: 'We shall show

you Our signs on the horizons and in yourselves' (Q. 41. 53). Mevlana remarks these signs of God everywhere. God's creation is unceasing. Some of Rumi's verses remind one, in their colourful imagery, of the paeans of praise of God in the *Psalms*. For example, 'All the treasures of the heavens and the earth are in Him', as is strongly reiterated in *Fihi ma fihi*,[39] or 'He acts as He wills' (Q. 14. 27); 'Neither slumber overcomes Him nor sleep' (Q. 2. 255); and 'Every day He is upon a work' (Q. 55. 29).

These works bear witness to God's direct role in creation. According to Mevlana, the whole Qur'an points to the fact that there are no secondary factors in creation. They only exist to screen His creative power, since it is only through a veil that man can conceive of the absolute. As the story of the ants on the beautifully illustrated manuscript shows, secondary creative factors only exist in the imagination.[40] This is a concept which Rumi took over from al-Ghazali's writings and reworked as poetry. While the first ant attributes the beautiful decorations to the effect of the pen, the next one thinks they could be the work of the hand, the third the arm, and so on until eventually the real source is reached – the divine will, which is mediated through the intellect.

The whole world has only been created for the sake of God. Every twig, every bird, every grain of dust sings His praises in its own language. All atoms are God's army and act in accordance with His commands, whether they comprise fire or water or animals. Fire will only burn man if God so commands it. This is clear from the Qur'anic story of Abraham who, thrown by Nimrod onto a huge pyre, experienced how the fire was for him 'restful and pleasant' (Q. 21. 69). Fire which is transformed by God makes its appearance in poetry as a sweet rose-garden.

To find the path to God, man should look at His creation, provided that he always recognizes the work of the Creator in everything he sees. Should he love creation and the creatures for their own sakes, then he must be counted a polytheist, an infidel. Should he however see everything as a token of the divinity, then he can be reckoned a true monotheist. Rumi took this concept also from al-Ghazali. For God can create everything and transform everything. Is it not His inexplicable power that transforms a thorn into a rose,[41] or a common stone into a ruby?[42]

God creates everything from the treasure-house of non-existence and does it according to the requirements of each case. Why should he give the worm eyes when it lives underground? Did he not inspire the bees to build their hives and make honey and wax (Q. 16. 68)?

The world is constructed in layers, starting with minerals and ending at the top with man, the only being with a double nature, as Mevlana describes it so drastically:

> Man's situation is thus: the feathers of an angel were tied to the tail of an ass, in order that in the brilliance of this company, the ass might perhaps become an angel... [43]

Whenever two created materials meet they produce something more exalted. Stone and iron brought together can engender fire, for everything in the cosmos is to some extent a mother, who on coming into contact with something else, gives birth to something higher.

But how did creation happen? God created the world with the creating imperative '*kun!*' ('be!'). In a broader sense, however, creation can be seen as a longer-lasting process, as indicated by the Qur'an's description of the creation of the world in six 'days' (Q. 7. 54, etc.). Together with many other

mystics, Mevlana argues that this shows that maturation and growth are a slow process, that one must have much patience to observe and follow this divinely ordained process to the end. Impatience is not appropriate for understanding God's decisions. For everything lies in His hands and He knows when the right moment has come. The mature human being will slowly learn to understand this secret and will not doubt God's wisdom or fall into despair.

The creating word '*kun!*' being writen in Arabic with just the two consonants, *kāf* and *nūn*, has very special significance for Mevlana, as for innumerable other pious believers. It means that the eternal, immutable oneness of God shows itself to humankind in two aspects: in the very act of creation dichotomy enters on the level of the created. God reveals Himself as He who is only to be recognized through opposites and in whom these opposites come together. The so-called 99 'most beautiful names' of God point to this fact. It is He who raises and casts down; who grants life and death; who shows Himself in His indescribable beauty and goodness and also in His majesty and anger. He combines in Himself what Rudolf Otto described as the *mysterium tremendum* and the *mysterium fascinans*.[44] One can also link up to the yin and yang concept, so that Sachiko Murata, a Japanese Islamic scholar, actually speaks of the 'Tao of Islam'.[45]

Mevlana likes referring to the saying of the Prophet, when he says that man lies between two of God's fingers, i.e., that he continually lives between the positive and the apparently negative:

> My heart becomes like a quill in the hands of the Beloved,
> Tonight he may write a Z and tomorrow an S,
> He sharpens the quill for *riqa*ᶜ or for *naskh*,
> And the quill says 'Yes, I know what I am... I obey'.[46]

The apparently contradictory names of God always work together to bring about day and night, health and sickness, life and death. Psychological conditions like fear and hope, depression and comprehension can also be seen from this point of view. Does not the water of life lie in the deepest ravine, only to be found after arduous journeying? And does not the 'midnight sun' light up the deepest night of depression, the apparent moment of alienation from God, as the Sufis repeatedly stress?

In the divine unity everything is one, and all times are one within the Creator. Diversity only becomes visible and palpable with the act of creation. But man needs the veil of created things to perceive God, however vaguely. The wind is invisible, but one can perceive it through the dust it whirls round or the leaves it stirs. Like all other manifestations, wind can have both positive and negative effects depending on God's will. The wind destroyed the unbelieving people of ʿAd, but served Solomon as a chariot, just as the Nile turned to blood for Pharaoh while it saved the children of Israel. No two people appear to their fellows as they really are. A man's acts can be seen by one as positive and by another as negative.

A perceptive person can already recognize this continual manifestation of God's work in breathing – who is not reminded here of Goethe's verse in the *West-östlicher Divan*:[47]

In drawing breath are a pair of graces...
You thank God when He presses you,
And thank Him when He lets you go again.

Mevlana was firmly convinced that absolute evil does not exist and that what appears to be terrible also has its place in the immense tissue of God's work. For God does

not act except with definite purpose. Does a calligrapher only write for the sake of the letters and not also so that his text should be read? Like God, the calligrapher and the painter can paint both beauty and ugliness. Even an ugly picture can testify to the skill of the painter, for a true artist wants to achieve something with his work. For example, he might wish to amuse children or remind the viewer of absent friends. This may sound odd in the Islamic tradition which abhors imagery, but Rumi seems here to be referring to the practices of his Greek neighbours. We know, for example, that one of his female admirers had his portrait painted before she left Konya.

If God destroys something it is in order to replace it with something better. An example of this are the rejected verses of the Qur'an which had to be cancelled or changed in accordance with a later revelation to the Prophet. Destruction for the sake of improvement, for the sake of a new beginning – this is one of the central concepts in Mevlana's poetry. God's anger can sometimes be more useful to humanity than His grace. Grace can be concealed in punishment like a costly jewel in a lump of muck. Grace and anger reveal God's greatness in equal measure, as Mevlana shows in an image which modern people may find shocking but which appeared entirely reasonable in his time:

A king has in his domain prisons and gallows, robes of honour and riches, property and servants, ceremonies and festivities, drums and banners. In relation to the king all these things are good. Just as robes of honour are part of the perfection of his kingdom, so are gallows, execution and dungeons. In realtion to him, all these things are part of his kingdom's greatness – but for his people, how could gallows and robes of honour be one and the same?[48]

God can *command* both good and evil, but He *wills* only the good. Just like the doctor who hopes that his patient will get better but also wants there to be ill people on whom he can display his skill, or the baker who hopes to find a lot of hungry people, so he can do his job satisfying them. Indeed Mevlana goes so far as to state that, analogously to certain Christian teachings, God needs sinners in order to expend from the cornucopia of his grace. Does water not wish to clean the unclean? Even hell has its purpose, since the unbelievers who did not praise God in their lives, now, out of yearning for Him, raise their voices in His praises, for 'everything has only been created for the purpose of praising and exalting God' (Q. 51. 56). That is why the praise of God permeates all Mevlana's work. If God so wills it, even the deepest sorrow can turn into joy, and chains become a means of freedom. No one can find his way in this contradictory world using reason alone.

God also created angels who serve him. Gabriel is the bringer of prophetic inspiration; Michael the distributor of food; Israfil, whose trumpet blast will announce the Last Judgement, can sometimes be compared to the perfect man of God who revives the dead hearts of his contemporaries. Azrael, the angel of death, also makes his appearance in the *Mathnavi*. One should not forget however that great Gabriel who has guided the prophets since Adam's time, can only transmit a part of God's message. He, who accompanied Muhammad on his journey through the heavens, had to stay behind at the 'lote-tree of the outer boundary', the end of the created world, while the Prophet was allowed to enter into God's immediate presence. Thus in Mevlana's works, Gabriel sometimes becomes the symbol of the intellect, unable to

gain admission to the sanctuary of God's loving presence, even though he can guide the seeker to its threshold.[49]

Some passages of the *Mathnavi*, especially in Books III and IV, speak of the universal intellect that lies behind all multilayered created phenomena. These seem to stem from the time when Mevlana was in his sixties, and may have been inspired to an apparently more philosophical view of God by his friendship with Sadruddin Qunavi, the step-son of Ibn ʿArabi, whose vocabulary sometimes creeps into his poetry, albeit inconsistently. Generally speaking though, Mevlana avoids addressing theological and philosophical problems, sticking to the old rule: 'Don't ponder the nature of God. Ponder His attributes.'

One can find the attributes of God by considering His works. Can one not assess the skill of an architect by studying the buildings he has designed? The plan that underlies buildings is subtler than the construction itself and gives an idea of the greatness of the master. Basically, all that one can say of God is the Qurʾanic description, 'He is the first and the last. He is the inside and the outside' (Q. 57. 3). He is the One who is not touched by past and future. Belief and unbelief are merely his gatekeepers, as Sanaʾi said. Man cannot even describe one atom of God's beauty. He only knows that everything rests on him and goes back to him. Even His name is basically unutterable. Thus Rumi in one of his most beautiful ghazals:

Hold fast the hem of His grace
For directly He will flee!
But don't draw Him tensed as for an arrow
For He will then fly your bow...
You seek Him up there in His sky,
He shines as the moon in the lake;
Full of yearning you lunge into the water

Whereon He flees to the sky...
So likewise His name escapes you
So soon as you will to utter it.
Whereon do not rush to say:
'Look here! Such a one flies off!' –
That is the how He flees – and if you would
Portray the form of Him in lines,
The image will escape you; from the canvas,
From the heart, the sign will flee.[50]

He cannot be found anywhere. He, who is everywhere, even in *lā makān*, the 'place which is no place', beyond space and time.

But like all Sufis, Mevlana knew that there is a place where God can be found – the heart of one who loves Him. 'Heaven and earth cannot contain Me, but the heart of a faithful servant can' runs a saying from outside the Qur'an, one that Mevlana particularly liked. The heart, broken by continual suffering, is the ruin which contains the treasure 'God', for treasures are only to be found in ruins. When one has recognized one's own worthlessness, one's total 'nothingness', it is possible that one may find the eternal merciful Lord. Thus one might correctly say that 'He who knows himself, knows his Lord' – an unexpected expression of the ancient maxim, 'Know thyself', here newly interpreted in the spirit of the loving poet.

When Mevlana speaks of the majesty of God he again and again and in different images comes back to the theme of the *creatio ex nihilo* or 'creation from nothing'. It is the *ʿadam* or 'non-being' to which God has given existence. Although it is not clear from Mevlana's numerous descriptions of *ʿadam* how one should imagine this 'non-being' or 'non-existence', for Mevlana it is an ocean from which, on God's creative

command, the existing beings emerge, as he has indicated in one of his great visionary poems:

> The seething ocean foamed
> In every foaming flake
> Someone's image became visible
> And took broader form
> And every body of foam
> That received signs from the sea
> At this sign melted
> And slipped back into the brine.[51]

The indications are, as one might expect, contradictory. In numerous contexts *ʿadam* appears to be the condition of the seeker who has lost his identity in God, as one can imagine from the famous passage in the *Mathnavi* about the towering ladder –

> Look. I died as a stone and was resurrected as a plant...

the last line of which, left untranslated by Rückert, runs:

> And *ʿadam* calls with the notes of the organ: 'Truly, we are returning to Him' (Q. 2. 156)[52]

ʿAdam, as Mevlana once sang, is the land where the caravan rests each night on the path which leads to God and is the place to which the saints go 'when they dream a dream without dreaming'. In the absolute peace of *ʿadam* he who has lost his identity is transformed into a song of praise. Later on we hear that, like a storm, *ʿadam* could sweep away the huge mountain of 'existence'. In this context, perhaps one may recall the formulation of the Baghdadi mystic Junayd (d. 910) who saw the aim of the seeker as 'to become as one was before one was', which means to return to an undifferentiated unity with God.

All the same, despite Rumi's assertions and his oft-repeated praise for the state of *ʿadam*, there is something which is even more sublime than that condition, namely Love (see below, esp. pp. 85–95).

If the world is God's creation, then man must accept it as a sign that he should understand. Mevlana repeatedly points to this. Nonetheless, his verses contain many terms which remind one of the old ascetic renunciation of the world: the world is a pile of dung only visited by dogs; a miserable lump of carrion, and – a favourite image – a lascivious, old and ugly slattern who tries to disguise her wrinkles with beautifully illuminated copies of the Qurʾan and seeks to seduce and then to kill thousands of lovers:[53]

> Who is this shabby old crone?
> Crude little hypocrite
> Layer on layer like an onion,
> Stinking like awful garlic.[54]

With comments like this Mevlana belongs to an old ascetic tradition that is well know to us from Christianity and Buddhism also.

On other occasions Mevlana explains the world as a dream. Does the world not disappear when one covers one's eyes with a blindfold? What one experiences in this world is no different from the pain and joy that one can experience in a dream. Did the Prophet not say 'Men sleep and when they die they awake'? This does not mean, however, that everything man does in this world is without importance. Far from it. On waking, which is to say at death, in the dawn of eternity, deeds will be analysed just as dreams are interpreted in this world. Then everyone will learn what fruits his dream, that is to say his actions in this life, will bear in the afterlife.

God's country, His real home, lies beyond sleeping and waking, and it is thither that the soul looks with yearning.

Mevlana's different, indeed partly contradictory, comments about God and the world are typical of his way of reacting unthinkingly to inspiration and of expressing impromptu thoughts in his poetry without paying any attention to logic. It is not appropriate to try and force him into a Procrustean bed of theological or even philosophical ideas. Numerous studies which attempt to interpret him exclusively in the light of Ibn ʿArabi's ideas completely miss the point. For him there is only one issue – the immense power of God (and Love) from which everything stems and in whose hands man is ready to accept in love everything He sends:

> If He make me into a beaker, I become a beaker
> If He make me a dagger, I become a dagger,
> If He make me a fountain, I give out water,
> If He make me fire, I give out heat,
> If He make me rain, I yield the harvest
> If He make me a needle, I prick the heart,
> If He make me a snake, I spit out poison,
> If He make me a friend, I serve him.[55]

This is the point of view of someone who has experienced all-embracing, all-penetrating love and yields himself to it without reserve.

Just as the first part of the declaration of faith is the recognition of the oneness, unity, and sovereignty of God, the second part is the recognition of the Prophet Muhammad as his emissary. It will scarcely be apparent to the Western reader of Mevlana's poetry in its modern translation to what extent the poet revered the Prophet. It is no coincidence that the dervishes' dance begins with the *na't-i sharif*, the hymn of

praise to the Prophet who is honoured with the most select titles.

At its end the poem links Shams-i Tabriz with the Prophet, for he was a passionate devotee of Muhammad and Mevlana's love for the Prophet, which is the normal sentiment of every Muslim, was intensified still further by his example. When one reads the references to the Prophet in the *Divan* and the *Mathnavi*, one realizes how deeply the writer has drawn from the rich treasury of legends and traditions that surround him. He was completely convinced of the truth of the non-Qur'anic teaching, in which God says '*law laka*' – 'but for you, I would not have created the world'. For him, Muhammad is the purpose and aim of creation. It is his light which guides humanity. He is the caravan-leader for souls seeking truth. Not only humans, but also animals and inanimate objects recognize his greatness.[56] One of the favourite stories that is told in the *Mathnavi* and to which the poet often refers, is that of the lamenting stump of the palm tree. The Prophet leant on this piece of wood while preaching, but when a proper lectern was set up for him the abandoned stump complained so bitterly that the Prophet consoled it and made it an example for the faithful.[57] Mevlana also tells the story of the eagle which carried off the Prophet's shoe in order to shake out the snake which had hidden itself in it.[58] Again and again Muhammad's gentleness is emphasized.

Belief in Muhammad as the concluding bearer of God's message completes the Muslim's belief in the prophets who preceded him. For the Qur'an mentions the preachers who had been sent before to remind mankind of the creative power of God – beginning with Adam and Noah, the patriarchs, and continuing with Solomon the King-Prophet and the

Arab prophets Salih and Hud. Moses is often mentioned as strict and precise, Jesus as kind and poor with nowhere to lay his head. He is, as is traditional in Sufism, the example of modesty and love of God, and the doctor who heals all diseases, except stupidity! His breath brings life. Some of the most beautiful verses in the *Mathnavi* are devoted to his virgin mother. Rumi's account of the Annunciation could almost have been taken from a mediaeval prayer-book.[59]

Two prophets occupy a special position: Solomon (Sulayman) and Joseph (Yusuf). Sulayman is the miraculously gifted master, surrounded by spirits and animals, whom the wind and the animal kingdom obey. The Queen of Sheba follows his call, gives away all her wealth out of love, and gives herself up to the love of God. And, for all his power, Sulayman still has time to pay attention to the needs of the tiny ants (Qurʾan, sura 27). However, it is Yusuf, known to us from sura 12, who is Rumi's favourite. Up to a point, he becomes the symbol for his own beloved, for whom he yearns as much as Zulaykha did for Yusuf. The final scene of the Yusuf story in Book 6 of the *Mathnavi* gives a hint of this.[60] It is Yusuf who symbolizes eternal beauty. What gift could one give him but a mirror so that he could admire his own beauty? But the mirror is the heart of the lover, polished by suffering and thoughts of God. Yusuf is, as elsewhere, the symbol of divine beauty, the beloved par excellence, to whom all hearts feel drawn.

The Prophet Muhammad combines the good qualities of all the prophets who have preceded him. He was blessed by being allowed to behold God face to face and speak with Him during his nocturnal journey through the heavens. He became the intercessor for his community and is the bearer of God's word, passing it on in unadulterated form. For

he is '*ummi*' a word that is usually translated as 'unlettered'. Intellectual knowledge could have misled him to distort the revelations granted to him by adding his own gloss. For Mevlana, Muhammad is the finest embodiment of God's grace, but even he longed for the immediate proximity of his divine Lord.

The declaration of faith, that there is no divinity but God and that Muhammad is his emissary, forms the basis for Rumi's work. But he repeatedly dedicated verses to the other pillars of Islam – prayer, alms, fasting, and pilgrimage, with fasting and prayer given central attention. Long periods of fasting had been typical for the ascetics since earliest times. Mevlana often indicated the importance not only of the Ramadan fast but of fasting in general. There is an entire poem in which each line ends with the rhyme '*siyam*' (fast).[61] Fasting is, here he uses a word from martial vocabulary, the catapult with which one can destroy the fortress of darkness, oppression, and atheism,[62] and when the fat cow of human greed has been killed with fasting,[63] then will one greet with joy the slim crescent moon at the end of Ramadan.

Mevlana also dedicated some verses to the pilgrimage. As a young man he had himself undertaken the arduous journey to Makka with his parents and knew the hardships of the road through sand and desert, with only camel's milk to drink and the attacks of the Bedouin to contend with. However, the actual pilgrimage, as he, like innumerable other Sufis, declares, is the inner journey to the presence of the divine beloved. The earthly Kaʿba, according to traditional belief the mirror-image of the heavenly one, is also the symbol of the longed for union with the divine beloved. To kiss the black stone recalled the spiritual kiss of the beloved.[64]

Alms (*zakat*) barely receives a mention in Rumi's work. He uses from time to time the common expression *zakat-i la'l,* the 'ruby tax', to describe the kiss hoped for from the beloved.[65] The faithful have to contribute a fixed proportion of their fortune – cattle, cash, jewels, etc. – and traditional imagery likes to compare the lips of the beloved to rubies.

But the focus of Mevlana's thought is prayer, whether the ritual prayer (*salah, namaz*), informal supplication (*duʿa, munajat*), or direct invocation of God (*dhikr*).

It is hardly surprising that one of the first chapters of the *Masnavi* to become known in Europe was the story of the man at prayer waiting in vain for God's response:

'O God', called someone for many nights
And his mouth became sweet from the noise of it.
'You spend much time calling', mocked Satan,
'Where is God's reply 'Here I am'?
No, no reply comes down from the lofty throne
How much longer are you going to cry 'Oh God'?
But he stayed silent, his head bowed.
And saw in a dream how Khidr descended
And said 'Why do you no longer call His name?
Have you forgotten what you yearned for?'
He said: 'The answer never comes that "I am here"
So now I fear he may bar the door to me.'
Your call 'O God' is my call 'I am here'!
Your pain and entreaty is a message from Me
And all your straining to reach me.
Is but a sign that I reach out to you,
Your pain of love is my homage to you
In your call 'O God' are a hundred 'Here I ams'.[66]

This passage was first translated by F. A. D. Tholuck in his small book '*Ssufismus sive theologia Persarum pantheistica*' published in 1821. The young Evangelical theologian found

the idea that 'God worships Himself in the act of prayer, both abstruse and extremely bold'. He published the story in his *Blüthenlese aus der morgenländischen Mystik*, which appeared four years later, and became reasonably well-known in educated circles. However, it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that Z. V. Zettersteen's Swedish translation came to the attention of the great Swedish religious historian Archbishop Nathan Söderblom who in 1902 wrote in his 'Främmande Religionskunder' that Rumi had written 'those wonderful words about prayer and listening to prayer', whose consoling truth was also to be found in Pascal's works.

From then on the story became common knowledge, especially for those concerned like R. A. Nicholson with Rumi or Friedrich Heiler with the problematic of prayer. Of course, hardly anyone was aware that this pretty story actually formed not only the essence of Mevlana's teaching but also had its roots deep in classical Sufism. Mevlana is the one who expressed the secret of prayer most often and most eloquently. After all he himself lived completely in prayer:

> I became completely prayer. I have entreated so much
> That whoever sees me, begs a prayer from me.[67]

On the other hand, one should not overlook the fact that he also pays attention to the ritual aspect of compulsory prayer, and praises its prescribed ritual ablutions, since 'no one should behold the virgins of Paradise with a dirty face'.[68] For him the five prayers are there to illuminate the five senses of man, while the heart corresponds to the *Fatiha* (sura 1) that must be recited in every prayer.[69] Furthermore, the *Allahu akbar* ('God is greater') that is uttered both before and during prayer, is the same formula that is invoked when

sacrificing animals, for during prayer man offers himself to God as a sacrifice of the heart.

The *Fatiha* opens the way to the spiritual world; as Rumi puts it, it transforms man into light. Not only man but all nature prays the *Fatiha:*

'We worship You', in winter the garden prays.
'We ask Your help', it says in Spring.
'We worship You' means I come here begging;
Open the gate to joy and do not leave me in distress.
'We ask Your help': I am breaking
Under the weight of fruit. O Helper, watch over me now.[70]

Prayer is the best way to approach God and even though one can never reach his presence, prayer places man in a mysterious relationship with Him; just as if one's hand might reach into a half-open box, touch a piece of musk and retain the perfume all day.[71]

The outer forms of prayer are the preconditions for the inner experience. When Q. 96: 19 enjoins, 'Cast yourself down and approach!', the meaning is clear 'The prostration of the body brings the soul closer to God'.[72] Of course he who truly loves God is, as the Qur'an says, 'Permanently in prayer' (Q. 70: 23). Prayer is the inner conversation between the lover and the beloved. (It was typical for Rumi that he wove this profound truth into an amusing story about the mouse who fell in love with a frog.)[73]

Already in the early days Sufis addressed the question as to whether performance of ritual prayer disturbed or deepened the closeness to God achieved in ecstasy. The answers they came up with are contradictory. Mevlana's *Divan* contains a poem, also mentioned by his biographer Sipahsalar in the context of Mevlana's ecstatic trance on an icy winter's night which he had spent in prayer. The poem

celebrates the ecstatic experience of the master in a brisk metre alternating two long and two short syllables:

When at evening prayer-time the rest
Are laying tablecloth and candles,
I am within a vision of the Friend,
Sighs, laments, hurt and sorrow;
I wash myself before prayer with tears
So then my prayer will be aflame:
The masjid door catches fire where
My call to prayer hits home!
Is it sound, a drunkard's prayer,
Tell me, is it sound and valid?
For he's ignorant of the time
Of prayer, nor even knows its place.
Is it two cycles I have done
Of prayer, or is it rather eight?
And what sura did I recite
Since I no longer have a mouth?
How shall I knock at His gate,
Since to me neither heart remains
Nor tongue? You took away from me
Heart and tongue, Lord, so give me
Pardon. Lord, be merciful...[74]

Mevlana is playing here on the Qur'anic prohibition: 'Do not approach prayer when you are drunk' (Q. 4: 43). But he knows that the true prayer-leader whom he is following is Love. And should this prayer-leader offer the worshipper even half a greeting of peace, he will, spurning all that is worldly, at once recite the four-fold formula, *Allahu akbar*, the prayer of the dead. The night prayer is however a light in the gloom[75] – not for nothing does Mevlana often quote the example of Jonah, who prayed from inside the whale.[76]

Mevlana was completely convinced that prayer, however offered, is heard, for 'prayer is the key to the needs of man' and God had promised 'Call me and I will answer!' (Q. 40: 60). Man's call to God is a rope with which he can lift himself out of the deep well of desperation.[77] Indeed, desperation, hopelessness itself, is one means of reaching God. For most people forget God when they are happy but turn to Him when they are suffering or unhappy.[78] And mostly they forget to thank Him for saving them.

Mevlana frequently says that God likes to test those who love Him by not at once reacting to their prayers. After all, don't we put parrots and nightingales in cages because we like the sound of their voices? And while we may quickly send an old and ugly beggar on his way with a small coin or a piece of bread, don't we often keep a young and attractive beggar waiting so we can enjoy his appearance the longer?[79] These stories may sound frivolous to modern ears, but Mevlana seems to have based himself on a hadith quoted by the great Sufi writer al-Qushayri (d. 1074) in which God commands Gabriel not to respond at once to the prayers of his most beloved friends so he may take pleasure in the sound of their voices...

It is these only too human stories that give us an idea of how deep and intense was the relationship between Mevlana and his Creator. The touching story of the old harpist belongs to this category. The harpist, who had spent all his life on useless frivolous things, repents and understands that God has been nourishing and protecting him for 70 long years despite his disobedience. Now that he is completely destitute, he plays on his half-broken harp a song of gratitude because he understands that he was and remains God's guest.[80]

The most famous of all the prayer stories in the *Mathnavi* must be the one about the shepherd who addresses God with completely unsuitable names and epithets:

> Moses saw a shepherd on the road,
> Who was saying: 'You who choose whomever You will,
> Where are You that I may become Your servant
> Mend Your robe, comb Your hair,
> Wash Your clothes and kill Your lice,
> Bring You milk, O You, high exalted,
> Kiss Your hand and massage Your feet,
> And at night time sweep Your place,
> O You to whom I sacrifice my kid-goats![81]

Moses, the law-bounded prophet, is shocked when he hears how the shepherd addresses God. He orders the childish worshipper to stuff cotton wool into his mouth and not to offend the Ever-Living one with such improper words. But he must learn that for God what counts is the heart of the worshipper and not just theologically correct formulae. Does God not hear the supplications of menstruating women, even when the law regards that loss of blood as a bar to prayer?[82]

Mevlana's way of reworking well-known stories is remarkable. In 'Attar's work the angry half-naked dervish complains that the local governor looks after his servants better than God does. Rumi takes up the complaint but reminds the worshipper that the governor can only make gifts of clothes and head-coverings. What use would they be if God had not already given the body and the head?[83]

Mevlana sees divine wisdom everywhere, even in unanswered prayer:

> Praise be to God for this not-answering!
> He will profit (for me). I took it for a loss![84]

The sublimation of initial disappointment and the re-working of negative experience into positive action is perhaps most beautifully expressed in the story of the preacher who only prays for wrong-doers:

A preacher as soon as he stepped up
Began to pray only for robbers.
And when asked why,
He said, they've been useful for me.
That's why I prayed for them.
I saw so much hate and oppression in them,
That I was swept from evil to good.
Whenever I turned to the world,
I received beatings and hurts at their hand,
Praying for help I drew near to God
The wolves showed me the right path,
Thus they became the source of my redemption,
That's why my prayer is for them.[85]

Prayers like this are like Spirit-Birds, indeed like the heavenly bird, the *Simurgh*, which flies beyond the seven heavens.[86]

He who truly loves God sees that everything in the world is to be found in prayer. For every creature has only one real task – to serve God and worship Him, each in its own way:

Trees stand in prayer, birds sing the praises of God and the violet prostrates itself in prayer.[87]

Don't the trees spread out their branches as though in entreaty? That is especially clear for plane-trees whose five pointed leaves are like hands.[88] Every birdsong is the expression of a prayer, just as Sana'i hinted in his complex 'Litany of the Birds'. The nightingale is the prayer-leader and the stork with his endless *lak lak* is only repeating the *al-*

mulku lak al-hamdu lak ('Yours is the kingdom and to you is the praise').[89] Like the great Egyptian mystic Dhu l-Nun (d. 859), Mevlana understood the song of praise of every created thing, whether birds or stones, streams or flowers. Such prayers do not need to be expressed in words. The wise man sees and hears them through the *lisan al-hal*, that silent eloquence with which everything created expresses its requests and its praises to God. And if man does not know how to address God, or to entreat or praise Him, then he should pray for guidance:

> We ask You to put in our hearts
> The correct word, to move You rightly,
> Hearkening comes from You just as prayer does;
> Certainty just as dread when faced with majesty.[90]

These verses lead us back to the central mystery of prayer to which we referred at the start. There is an early tradition ascribed to the Prophet but which probably originates from Sufi circles:

> When His servant cries 'Oh my Lord!', then God replies,
> '*Labbayka*, here I am at your service. Ask, it will be given!'[91]

This is the word on which the story quoted earlier rests. One should not forget that, according to Islamic teaching, all activity comes from God. Just as He addressed not-yet-created humanity, saying : 'Am I not your Lord' (Q. 7. 172) and as He taught Adam the names (Q. 2. 31), so is all human activity nothing but a reply to God's address. Is it not written at the end of Q. 5. 59 'He loves them and they love Him'? Mevlana best expressed this mutual relationship in the following verse from the *Mathnavi* :

> Not only do the thirsty seek water; water seeks the thirsty.[92]

God longs for man's prayer and puts the appeal into man's mouth. Prayer is a gift, for

How else could a rose grow out of an ash-pit?[93]

The origins of the idea of *oratio infusa* are much older than Mevlana. The Iraqi mystic Niffari (d. 965) here deserves special mention, who constantly emphasizes that all analytical and engrossing activity stems from God.

For his part, Mevlana repeatedly reminds his audience that man must completely surrender for God's work to take effect. It is indispensable to embrace silence and in this silence to reach the state of non-existence. Only when one has been reduced to nothing, has escaped existence, can one be transformed into praise for God. So Mevlana sings:

You be quiet now that the Lord
Who gave you speech now speaks
Who thought of doors and locks
And who also invented the key.[94]

And one understands why he ends so many of his odes with the word '*khamush*' (quiet, silent). In a particularly beautiful description of the prayer of an ecstatic Sufi, Mevlana expressed this concept in poetry:

The prayer came from his lips
Like the entreaty of a true mother
Tears streamed from his eyes
The prayer escaped him unconsciously
Quite independently of his will
It was not he who prayed but the Lord
In his ecstasy God Himself said the prayer
And hearkened to it too.[95]

It was not only in his poetry that Mevlana described the essence of this deepest form of prayer. He also evoked it in *Fihi ma fihi* :

The emir asked, is there no shorter way to God than through formal prayer? He replied 'Through prayer. But prayer is not confined to the outer form. This is the physical aspect of prayer, for formal prayer has a beginning and an end and everything that has beginning and end is physical. The words 'God is greater' are the beginning of every prayer and the word 'Peace' marks its end. This formal prayer has been laid down by the Prophet. The Prophet who gave us Muslim prayer said 'I do have times with God in which no other prophet or angel is present'. From this we learned that the 'soul' of prayer does not take this external form alone, but is a kind of immersion, a state of unconsciousness, from which all external shapes are absent and where they cannot gain entry. Even Gabriel, who is a pure spirit, has no place there'.[96]

Mevlana Rumi as teacher

In the *Mathnavi* (III, 1522 ff.)[97] Mevlana happily tells the story of the naughty schoolboys who kept looking critically at their teacher and, with pretended concern, suggested that he looked pale and ill. And the more sympathetically they looked at him, the more miserable he felt, until he finally decided to go home and lie down. Thus they achieved their aim of a day off school.

This type of story about teachers is quite common in classical Islamic literature. Teachers are portrayed as rather stupid poor creatures who battle their miserable way through life and receive respect from no one. Mevlana's story is only one of numerous examples of this attitude which can be found elsewhere in his work. But, like every Muslim, he also knew that the teacher occupies an important, indeed a central, position in society – as the traditional saying goes, 'I will become the slave of him who teaches me a single letter'.

Thus he also emphasizes that the prophets came to us as teachers:

They come down from the world without letters to the world of letters and become children for the sake of children, for the

Prophet said 'I have been sent as a teacher'. Although those who remain stuck in letters and sounds cannot attain the spiritual level of the prophets, they do receive strength from them and therein they grow and prosper and find peace.[98]

It is of course not only knowledge as such, the teaching of reading and writing, which counts, but rather *adab* – good manners, which is as important if not more so and which one must learn. This is implicit in Mevlana's remarks about the prophets. Sufism gives central importance to spiritual education. 'Sufism is good manners through and through' is the message of early handbooks on religious life like the *Kitab al-Luma'* of Sarraj (d. 998). In every one of the classical Sufi texts there is at least one chapter on correct behaviour. Al-Ghazali's classic work, the *Ihya' 'ulum al-din,* with which Mevlana was thoroughly familiar, teaches how man should be brought up and educated, by following the 'fine example' (*uswa hasana*, Q. 33. 21) of the Prophet in every respect. Polishing manners, acting in accordance with religious precepts whose aim is to develop man's best qualities, these represent the main concern of Rumi and innumerable other pious believers. Shortly before Rumi's time, Abu Najib al-Suhrawardi (d. 1168) with his book *Adab al-muridin*, and his nephew Abu Hafs 'Umar al-Suhrawardi with his *'Awarif al-ma'arif*, which is still studied today, laid down the rules for correct behaviour for aspiring Sufis. These rules remained valid in Sufi convents throughout the whole Islamic world up to the nineteenth century, and influenced the ethical behaviour of numerous Muslims who were loosely linked to the Sufi brotherhoods in a sort of 'external student' relationship.

However much Mevlana Rumi had been formed by his experience of white-hot love, he was also a gifted teacher

and tried, both in his *Mathnavi* and his prose sketches *Fihi ma fihi*, to influence his contemporaries in a variety of ways. The number of his disciples – including several pious women – grew. Amongst them were not only leading political figures of his time like the Minister Muʿinuddin Parvana and their wives, but also, (as some supercilious colleagues noted sniffily) greengrocers and butchers. Scholars and doctors also joined him. For this reason Mevlana was obliged to address the greatest possible variation in levels of understanding – the 'water of speech' came, as he once remarked, according to the intelligence of the listener. From here stems the astounding breadth of his poetry, especially from his early fifties onwards. Like some of his letters, the *Mathnavi* and the *Fihi ma fihi* reveal aspects of his personality that one would hardly expect from a brief scanning of the lyrics of his *Divan*, although the latter also contains instructive ghazals from his later years, as becomes clear from parallels with themes addressed in *Fihi ma fihi* and the *Mathnavi*.

The *Mathnavi* has been commented on over the centuries. It was as popular at the grand court of the Mughals in India as in Iran. Even today one meets people in the eastern parts of the Islamic world who can recite from it without difficulty. Mevlana himself called it his 'Unity Stall' and observed that he would need 40 camel-loads to carry everything his heart wanted to say.

What fascinates, indeed sometimes perhaps even shocks, the reader is his ability to describe the most sublime secrets of man's ascent into the presence of God in simple parables, in anecdotes and unexpected metaphors, as is particularly the case in the fifth book of the *Mathnavi*. Even the most broad-minded reader would hardly describe them as 'mystical' or even as 'spiritual'. 'My dirty jokes are not

dirty jokes but rather a form of instruction' as he says in a sentence borrowed from Sana'i. Knowing that the most sublime *mysterium* is not to be expressed in ordinary words, he repeatedly had recourse to such unexpected methods of instruction. While for all mysteries the warning is valid 'Tell no man, only the wise', at the same time the perceptive listener will recognize a deeper truth behind the veil of stories and jokes; just as he will understand from the story of the schoolmaster mentioned above that man can all too easily be led astray by empty chatter and thoughtless imitation unless he searches for the basic truth which underlies the story. This is particularly true of the amusing story of the Sufi who arrives at a Sufi convent where the residents have been longing for an excuse for a party with music and sweetmeats. Without his knowledge, they sell his donkey to raise the money. The visitor, swept along by the gaiety of the others, sings in time with the music 'The donkey's gone, gone is he' but is mighty surprised to discover the following morning that the beast really has gone: imitation leads to damage and loss.[99]

Mevlana set great store by good manners. He compares the *nafs*, the baser instincts and urges, with a dim-witted uncouth villager who comes to the city. Visiting the market, he storms around raising Cain, and creates every kind of uproar, smashing glasses, and stealing what he can, until *'aql* , good sense, appears in the shape of a policeman who gives him a good hiding until he finally understands how one should behave in the community. The allusion was well timed, for in Mevlana's day there existed groups of wandering dervishes who belonged to *bi-shar'* gangs, so called because they did not see themselves as bound by any religious law. Not only in Anatolia but also in India, dervishes of this sort

wandered from place to place, often clad in bear pelts and other grotesque garments. Their unruly behaviour shocked Mevlana and both in the *Mathnavi* and his prose works he criticizes their lack of good manners . Well as he understands that ecstatic love sweeps aside all inhibitions, all so-called etiquette, he also knows that this is an exceptional state which cannot be reached through one's own efforts alone but comes as a gift of grace. For ordinary people, the inner and outer aspects must be combined in harmony:

> Should you plant the stone of an apricot without the outer flesh, nothing will grow from it. But if you plant it with the outer husk, it will grow. In this way we understand that the outer wrapping of a thing also has a function.[100]

Outward appearances are needed to act as a vehicle for inner emotions. Just as the beautifully illuminated title page of a book gives an intimation of the value of the contents, so a man's behaviour, speech, and gestures indicate the value of his inner being. This is particularly true of his speech. The spoken word, a person's speech betrays more about him than anything else. Is the tongue not like the lid of a pot? When it moves one can smell whether what is brewing inside is delicious or unappetizing and indigestible. For this reason one has to take care when speaking, for the tongue reveals the nature of the speaker.[101]

Mevlana's emphasis on well-ordered behaviour contributed to the development of the Mevlevi Sufi order which was organized by his son Sultan Valad. Whoever has witnessed the *sema* knows that, like a ballet, every movement follows exact rules and has nothing to do with what Western readers associate with 'dancing dervishes' as a symbol of chaos. No, the Mevlevi order was, in Ottoman Turkey, the dervish order which attracted musicians, painters, and calligraphers, as well

as people from the well-educated classes for whom refined decency and exemplary behaviour represented basic values.

How did Mevlana behave towards his disciples and his family? Four children survived him: two from his first marriage. Of those two: Sultan Valad became his exemplary successor and retired three times in order to give recognition to his father's three friends; the other, ʿAlaʾuddin, was involved in the murder of Shams-i Tabriz. His second wife Kira, who came from a Christian family and was highly regarded for her piety, gave him two children, a son and a daughter.

Thus he was well acquainted with the upbringing of children (and were his disciples not also like children on the path to maturity?). Surprisingly many of his parables are taken from the life of children and the family. Isn't man like an embryo which protected in the darkness of its mother's womb can never dream of the wonderful colourful world outside? But when it is born it grasps that such a world truly exists and is a thousand times richer than anything it could have imagined. As Rumi says, the situation is exactly the same in this, our material world. How many people believe in another spiritual world that they will see after their second birth, that is after their death?[102]

Mevlana tells us how mothers in Konya would swaddle their babies and lay them in little cradles, like the ones which until a few decades ago used to hang from the ceilings of old Konya houses, where their mother would rock them with their big toe while cleaning vegetables or doing other household chores. The child is completely happy in this narrow bed. But what would happen if you tried to squeeze an adult into such a place? If a grown-up were tied up in a cradle or crib, that would be like a torture or a prison for him and he would no doubt do everything to free himself.[103]

Likewise the soul cannot have any idea what freedom means and feels perfectly happy in this mortal coil. Just as a child starts by drinking milk, so the soul must, to start with, be fed on simple words and concepts, until its 'wisdom teeth' grow and its owner becomes capable of understanding complex problems.[104] Would a child understand if one told it that the intimacy of love is like this or like that? One can only make do in answering his questions by saying 'It is like sugar'.[105]

Like everywhere, there were also family quarrels in Konya. Mevlana tells us in the *Mathnavi* how a father and a mother disagree as to whether their child should go to school or not. The mother, representative of the *nafs'*, the lower level in our nature, would like the child to stay at home where she can spoil it. The father on the other hand – representing *ruh* or 'spirit' – insists that the child should learn something fearing the teacher's cane, even when it doesn't enjoy school. Finally the father gets his way. Another remark of Mevlana's proves that by 'school' Mevlana means 'the school of love which consists of nothing but fire'.[106]

Mevlana sees children playing. Being unable to distinguish good from bad, they fill their little smocks with stones and all sorts of rubbish; or they are so absorbed in their games that they lose their jackets; just as most people forget the value of the afterlife because they prefer the temporary and basically valueless pleasures of this world. Likewise they play a spinning game with nuts, never realizing that the nuts contain valuable oil.[107] Fatherly understanding does everything possible to lure them to school – 'If you go to school, I'll buy you a little bird or an apple or a couple of nuts' – exactly as the spiritual guide promises his disciple small presents to lure him closer to the divine truth.

In *Fihi ma fihi*, Rumi gives a very pretty example of how education should be carried out. A teacher is teaching a child how to write, and:

> When the time comes for the child to write a line, it does so and shows it to the teacher. The teacher can see that it is crooked and uneven but he says kindly and indulgently to the child 'That's very nice – you have written it very well. Excellent! Just this one letter is a bit crooked. It ought to be written like this'. He praises everything else to stop the child becoming discouraged. With this praise, the child's weakness changes to a strength and he is gradually helped along the road to learning.[108]

Mevlana's own method of teaching must have been similar.

A central theme of his teaching was the concept of the 'spiritual ladder', an idea which also stands at the centre of Sanaʾi's teaching to which Mevlana owed so much. He was quite right when he said 'When one builds a minaret, the beginning consists of one brick.' If one doesn't take care when choosing and laying this brick, the whole building will one day collapse. The foundations for someone's development must be precisely laid. It is natural that the ritual observances as handed down from the Qurʾan and the Traditions of the Prophet should count for a pious Muslim as the basis for the sound development of the individual. However when one comes to talk of the formation of an integrated personality, Rumi offers a most interesting treatment of traditional teaching and practice.

For him, the first rung on the spiritual ladder is *tawba*, repentance. In a strange story he has explained the importance and purifying function of repentance; this is the story of the *tawbat al-nasuh* (*Mathnavi*, V. 2227ff.).[109] The expression *tawba nasuh* occurs in the Qurʾan with the meaning 'sincere

repentance' (Q. 66. 8). Mevlana invents a character called Nasuh who dresses up as a woman to gain entry to the women's bath-house and massage the women there. He carries this off with great success and pleasure until one day the princess who has come for a bath mislays a piece of jewellery and a search is ordered of all those present. What is to be done? The discovery of his subterfuge is imminent. Thereupon he repents sincerely and deeply, and his prayers and promise never again to commit such a sin are heard. The piece of jewellery is found before the search reaches him. He retires and even the most tempting promises of his former clients who are missing his skilful massage fail to lure him back to the bath-house.

Even the smallest weakness in the baser instinct – the *nafs* – must be eradicated, for, when decay gets into a tooth, you have to remove the tooth, or else your whole body will be affected. Likewise even the smallest errors and sins must be fought against, to stop them poisoning and corrupting the whole person. For Mevlana, as for all religious leaders, the *jihad al-akbar* , 'the greater struggle for the faith', is the struggle against the baser instincts. This belief crops up time and again in various disguises. It can appear as a black and dangerous dog,[110] or as a mouse.[111] It can resemble Pharaoh who claimed 'I am your supreme lord' and in doing so sinned against true belief in the one and only God.[112] The soul can also be an obstinate mount – a horse, ass, or camel – that must be trained with great trouble.[113] Or, in a particularly popular image, it can appear as a disobedient woman (the word *'nafs'* is feminine in Arabic).[114] It can also be portrayed as a cunning snake.[115] In short, hardly a negative metaphor exists which has not been used to describe this dangerous aspect of man's character. One must also be careful of its

wiles and deceit especially when one has already advanced some way along the path to God, for:

Nafs has a rosary and a Qur'an in the right hand, but a dagger and a sword up its sleeve.[116]

For when the believer thinks he has left all problems encountered on the path behind him and is approaching perfection, then the *nafs* invents even subtler temptations. For example, it makes him proud of his exercises in self-abasement and boastful of his piety, and that is even more dangerous than the temptations he has had to overcome.

Of course the stubbornness and malice of the *nafs* stem from its ignorance. If it understood how useful education is, it would at once defer to understanding and intelligence. Although a newly caught falcon does not relish being trained by the falconer, it would be grateful for the rigorous instruction if it understood that, at the end of it, it would have the honour of sitting close to the ruler on his arm.[117] It is the *ʿaql*, or reason, which helps to educate the *nafs*, but it is only a mediator – as Mevlana says, a policeman or watchman, who can slowly lead the seeker via a secure route to the gate of the king's castle, but who, despite all his useful services, can never enter the bridal chamber of Love.[118]

Among all the characteristics required of a Sufi, indeed of every human being, Mevlana stresses *tawakkul* or trust in God. This should not be the sort of blind trust that prevents one from undertaking anything for one's self or on one's own initiative. No, one should follow the example of the Prophet who advised a Bedouin, 'First tie up your camel and then trust in God'. Before all, one must act and do one's best and only then trust that God will grant his blessing and complete the work. In this way, true trust in God is the attitude of the

mature believer. The further he proceeds along the path, the stronger becomes his trust in God and His wisdom, because he achieves a growing understanding of God's work. This feeling is best expressed in this verse of Mevlana's:

> Do not weave from spit a net of cares like a spider.
> The links and joins are useless!
> Go, give your cares to Him who gave them you.
> Look to Him who disperses your sorrows.
> When you do not speak, your word becomes His word,
> When you do not weave, He then becomes the weaver.[119]

Another central motto for every seeker, just as for every teacher is *sabr* or patience. The old Sufis repeatedly reminded their audience that God needs a long time to let everything grow. '*Sabr jamil*', or 'splendid patience' receives a mention in the Qur'an (Q. 12. 18). Of course, argue the pious, He could have created and perfected everything in a single moment. But to teach humanity patience, he gave them examples. Must not countless sheep grow and be shorn and die before a gown or halter can be made from their wool? Thousands of rose-gardens must bloom and fade before the one perfect rose appears. And as Mevlana's spiritual master Sana'i said, generations and generations must be born and die before the Prophet can be chosen.

Mevlana does not fashion so grandiose a verse as Sana'i but his message is the same, and taught through simpler images. Man's seed needs nine months' development in the womb before a child can be born and, in its turn, that child needs ages before it can develop from its almost animal condition into a rational human being. Mevlana's spring poems, of which there are so many in the *Divan*, are often simply eulogies of patience. In cold winters the trees hold out patiently, like Jacob and Job.[120] That is why God rewards

them with beautiful robes of honour in spring, green like the silk robes of the blessed in paradise.

The positive counterpart of patience is *shukr*, thankfulness.

Patience is ever saying: 'I bring the good prospect
of unity with Him!'
While thankfulness is always saying: 'I own
a whole barn full of "grace" from Him!'[121]

It is typical of Mevlana that he always stresses the positive aspects of a disposition more than the negative. Of course man needs patience but, in the face of whatever happens, thankfulness is much weightier. The higher the person ascends on the ladder of spirituality, the better he comes to understand that thankfulness is an antidote against every negative and evil:

Thankfulness is a seeking; the bounties [of God] are chained up. If you hear the voice of thankfulness, you are disposed to give more. If God loves His servant, He tries him; if he endures patiently, He chooses him; and if he is thankful, He praises him.[122]

Thankfulness, as he says, is the greatest antidote, whereby wrath is converted to grace, and:

Thankfulness is sucking at the breast of [God's] bounty. However full the breast is, the milk does not flow so long as one does not suck.[123]

Thus Mevlana reiterates again and again that thankfulness is the greatest gift that God can give to a person.

The same holds in his attitude to the classical contradistinction between fear and hope, discussed in Sufi literature for centuries. On deliverance they say, 'Fear and hope are the two wings on which the person flies to God', and

doubtless both are necessary. Thus Mevlana answered a questioner when asked whether he might dare hope for reward for good deeds:

For example: a man has planted wheat. Naturally he hopes that the wheat will grow, while, equally, he fears that – God forbid! – a hindrance or misfortune might intervene...

Now, if somebody is hopeful and expects to get a recompense and turn a profit, then he applies himself to his labour with diligence. Such an expectation is his wings, and the stronger his wings, the stronger his flight. But if he is without hope, then he becomes slothful and good work and more upright service do not come from him anymore.[124]

In the sea of Love, to be sure, in the final unity, fear and hope disappear just like the planks of a boat smashed in the ocean.[125] Nevertheless, in the poetry of Mevlana, hope always has the last word:

Whoever has planted the seed of hope in this ground – is not the springtime of Your Grace presented to him a hundred times over?[126]

Fear is thus a preparatory step, as is hope, in precisely the way thankfulness is, an accomplishment of the mature person.

Then there is a charcateristic by which the whole life of the person ought to be permeated. That is *faqr*, 'poverty', that poverty which was the pride of the Prophet, for it is the attitude of the person who recognizes his own poverty and deficiency as compared to the eternal, everlasting God. Poverty does not mean (or does not mean only) possessing nothing, wandering about naked and in squalor –

If that naked fellow were a 'man' [i.e. a man of God], a knob of garlic too would be a man![127]

No, poverty is 'the wet-nurse who raises the person in right behaviour'.[128] It means breaking off all worldly ties, and in that respect it is often an equivalent of *fanā'*, 'extinction', as that is most defined in ʿAttar's *Mantiq al-tayr* and becomes clear in the seventh valley. Poverty can, with the negating *lā* – 'there is not, no' – be comparable to the *lā* at the opening of the credal confessions; this is (as the poets graphically put it) a sharp blade or a broom that clears the heart and leaves in it nothing, no consciousness of anything other than God. Poverty in this sense is absolute beauty and bounty; in it there are untold religious beauties and spiritual forms; it is a ruby mine and an unbounded land...[129]

With these associations in mind Mevlana turns to the problem of suffering, which is, on the journey to perfection, indispensable. Again and again he finds new images with which to enlighten the necessity of suffering and affliction. Everything – as he puts it – comes to maturity through suffering; be it the nut whose shell must be cracked enabling the precious, wholesome oil to be pressed out, or the mussel which one must prise apart so as to free the pearl.[130] Likewise, rough animal hide must pass through the painful blows of the tanning process so that it can become finest leather.[131] But one should look above all to the tilled field: the soil must be torn by the plough enabling the grain to sink into it so that it will die and then stand up again as corn – corn that will be ground by the millstone; that is so that the ensuing flour will then be baked in a fiery oven and made into bread; but the bread will be crushed by the teeth of a person, become part of the body and give strength to his soul.[132] Thus is that journey upward a way of suffering. Must

not juice also ferment so as to become wine, which then will witness the rapture of love?

In a light-hearted poem Mevlana tells of the foolish man from Qazwin who wants to have a lion tattooed on his back, but cannot stand the pain of the needle – so he asks the artist, first, not to depict a tail; then he thinks that an ear also is not altogether necessary, and

> He says: 'The lion does not need a belly! Of what use is a belly to the picture of a lion?'

There the tattooist gives up, and advises the customer first and foremost to learn patience and how to endure pain:

> Whoever saw a lion without tail, ear, belly?
> God Himself never fashioned such an animal!
> Be patient, my brother, with the pricking,
> That you may defeat your heathen soul![133]

Only a poet such as Mevlana could present an allegory of the reform of the person through the image of chickpeas, which, as they want to jump out of the boiling water, will be instructed by the housewife about the sense of their suffering in the cooking-pot.[134] That a quotation from the work of the martyr-mystic Hallaj should figure in this poem is typical of Mevlana, who again and again comes back to the death-seeking song of great love:

> Kill me, O my Friend,
> For only in death lies my life,
> And to me my life is only death,
> And in dying lies my living...

Especially noteworthy, however, is a parable addressing the necessity of suffering and pain, in which is found the motif of the birth of Christ in the soul that, half a century

later in Christian Germany, Meister Eckhart would make use of:

> It is pain which leads the person through each undertaking... Not until the labour pains set in did Maryam retire to the tree [Q. 19. 25]... This pain brought her to the tree, and the withered tree bore fruit.
> Love is like Maryam. Each of us has a Jesus in him. If pain sets in within us, our Jesus will be born. When no labour pains come, then Jesus goes back to his origin on the selfsame secret trail along which he had come, and leaves us behind, empty and without a share in him.[135]

Mevlana's teaching is broadly based on the Prophetic saying, used by Sufis since time immemorial: *mutu qabla an tamutu* – 'Die before you die.' That means, as the foregoing examples make clear, that the person ought in each moment to be sacrificing himself, in order that he may be reborn at a higher spiritual level.[136] At every moment one ought to give up something of one's own characteristics, morals, thoughts, and 'characterize oneself with the characteristics of God', that is, swap every negative characteristic for a positive one. No accident that Mevlana loves a saying of the Prophet, *aslama shaytani* –'My satan has wholly submitted himself to me' (or, in the widest sense of *aslama*, 'has become Muslim'). It is narrated that somebody had asked the Prophet how his *shaytan* behaved – *shaytan*, 'satan', stands here for *nafs*; it is the negative aspect of the person. It is to that question that the Prophet will have responded with the saying mentioned, and remarked that his *shaytan*, his impulsive self, did just what he commanded him to do. That is a good example for the transformation of lower characteristics into higher; for, as Mevlana stresses again and again, killing off the *nafs* (albeit also frequently commanded in Sufism) is not so important; it

is much more necessary to discipline it. Continuous religious training and continuous monitoring through vigil, fasting, and thanksgiving to God help in that. This cleans – to use another favourite Rumi image – the metal mirror of the soul of the rust covering it, until it becomes clear and can reflect the divine light, the countenance of the Beloved.[137] Toward the end of this labour of discipline, the once so unruly *nafs* then becomes the person's aide; the mount formerly so contrary can now, being no longer headstrong, swiftly carry its rider to the goal, the house of the Beloved. In like manner, the thief, if he transforms himself, becomes the best of policemen; for he knows all the criminals' tricks and ways, so he can catch them and defeat them.[138] Sublimating, not killing off, the lower characteristics, is the way.

Is not such a transformation much more wonderful than that which people consider a wonder? Mevlana follows the line of thought of the great Persian master, Abu Saʿid Abu l-Khayr (d. 1049), when he records:

> It is not so wonderful that a man goes from here to the Kaʿba in a day or in the blink of an eye. Such a wonder is performed also by the desert storm – in the blink of an eye it goes there, wherever it wishes. A genuine wonder is this: that God brings you from a lower state to a higher state, draws you from blameworthy actions to praiseworthy actions, so that you then journey from there to here, from ignorance to understanding, from inanimacy to life...[139]

Such a journey is, as will be evident from this passage, not really the work of the person, but is brought about through God's dynamic Love, which calls the person to Itself and draws him on, provided that he is willing to give up, on the way of Love, everything of the world that attaches to him.

However, the person often does not know at all whereto he really belongs.

He is a peculiar mixed being:

> The situation of man is like this, that feathers fit for an angel are tied to a donkey's tail, so that, perhaps, the donkey might, in the radiance of this association, become an angel...[140]

But all too often he forgets the angelic part of his being, forgets that God has endowed him with the 'trust', *amana* – that mysterious trust which He offered to heaven and earth and they did not accept (Q. 33. 72) – that trust which can be construed as faith, love, responsibility, or whatever else besides. Did not God, on the day of the ur-covenant – when He summoned forth as yet unfashioned mankind from the loins of the ur-Adam – address him with the words, *a-lastu bi-rabbi-kum?*, 'Am I not your Lord?' (Q. 7. 172)? Thus man was appointed from pre-eternity to be the servant of the divine Lord and also, as the Sufis believe, to be the lover. And yet more: God made him indeed His governor on the earth (Q. 2. 29) and thereby accorded to him a rank such that the angels themselves envy him. For sure, God has honoured the Children of Adam! (Q. 17. 70)

Man, however, forgets his high rank all too often. He can be likened not only to a donkey with angel's feathers but also to a duck, which lives half on dry land and half in water, half held down in this world, half pulled out to the divine ocean,[141] or – to use yet another and broader simile of Mevlana's – he is half honey-bee and half serpent.[142] And he is, as the ostrich bird is, unreliable and ever full of pretexts to get himself out of his duties:

> What sort of a bird are you, sir?
> What are you called? Whither your service?
> You do not fly and you do not graze,
> You confectioner-bird!

So like the ostrich bird – one says:
'Now fly!', and you say:
'I am a camel, rather – and since when
Does the camel fly?'
And comes the moment for the load,
you say: 'I am a bird!
Since when does a bird bear a load?
No, no fuss, if you please!'[143]

The saddest thing is that man all too easily forgets that God breathed into him His spirit (Q. 38. 72). Mevlana adopted a story from the great Persian poet, Anwari (d. *ca.* 1190), who narrated: somebody hides in a house because the king is out hunting donkeys. When the house-owner tells him that he is not a donkey, the frightened man answers that he is not sure whether people, in the present age, know at all the distinction between man and donkey.[144]

In Mevlana this same story becomes an example of man's understanding and forgetting his being something of an animal, and his being also nevertheless a Jesus, a spiritual being. (The conjoined Jesus–donkey, that is, spiritual and material principle, appears frequently in Mevlana.[145]) One can also liken man, as Mevlana does, to a grain sack in which (as in Q. 12. 70) Joseph hid a precious cup; but he forgot that he carried just such a cup in himself.[146] The way he behaves is

as if you broke a sword of finest Indian steel, such as one finds in a royal treasury, and then made it into a butcher's knife so as to cut therewith rotting cow's meat, and then said: 'But I did not leave this sword lying about useless, rather I used it for something useful'... or as if you used a bejewelled dagger as a spike [from which to hang] a gourd or broken pitcher...[147]

Every man should know – according to Mevlana – that the proper aim of education is to raise up a real man

of God, *mard* (and *mard* in the idiom of Persian Sufis also embraces the woman of God!), a man who remembers the ur-covenant, as also the trust, that God has given him. So long as he goes on distracting himself in the world or even thinking sanctimoniously of the joys of the hereafter, he is not a real man but a *mukhannath*, a passive pederast, a being that even the goats would laugh at.[148] Understandably one of the most renowned of Mevlana's stories is the great ghazal with the repeated refrain, 'That is my wish!', which culminates in the exclamation:

> I've had my fill of spirits and beasts – a (true) man is my wish![149]

This story, going back to ancient models, of the Master, who transformed the city with a lantern in search of a man, is not found only in the *Divan*, but also, indeed twice, in the *Mathnavi* – that indicates how central it was for Mevlana.[150]

He warns his hearers and readers that they must guard themselves on the journey against all kinds of dangers and hindrances. They must do this so that they pull away as quickly as possible from a thorn-bush that they or somebody else has unwittingly planted on the way. Moreover, they must also have the right company and, above all, the right caravan-leader. How many men have travelled to India or Herat, without worrying about anything but their commerce, and how many have found in Turkestan or China only scheming and hatred![151] Yet more deadly however is it when they follow a false leader – one of those blind ones who, having once fallen into muck and themselves not known it, give off such a stench as to sicken even the virgins of Paradise![152]

Dangerous too are the unteachable dimwits, as explained in a story about Jesus: why should Jesus, who could heal

the sick and raise the dead, flee from someone in the wilderness?[153]

> There Jesus said: 'By the Pure Being
> Of the Fashioner, Who fashioned the body, the soul,
> It is this magic, it is the Greatest Name,
> which I blew on the blind, the deaf, the lame,
> and I breathed it on a mountain of stone,
> which tore its dress and fell in pieces,
> I breathed it on the corpse, it came to life,
> I breathed it on the night, it yielded something.
> Yet, my breathing it on a dimwit's heart –
> a thousand times so – helped it not,
> it remained hard stone, never changing itself
> it became sand, out of which no seed grew!'[154]

Now, if dimwits cannot be cured even by Jesus and pose a danger to men, then the too-clever ones and the hair-splitting philosophers are even more dangerous for the soul. For the outward sciences – if they are separated from their divine source – are like a barn, wherein beasts abide for only a couple of days. As long as science and Love are separated, science is useless, indeed dangerous[155] – a thought that is taken up by Rumi's great modern interpreter, Iqbal (d. 1938). Yet more deadly is when someone seeks to interpret the Word of God, the Qur'an, with merely outward argumentation – such a man is, for all his erudition, comparable to a fly, his fancy is like donkey's urine, and his conceptions are as straw.[156] And Mevlana complains – as most mystics have done, continually and generally – that all the great professional scholars know and pretend to understand all the outward problems, problems which are, fundamentally, irrelevant, while understanding from them nothing of what is truly of weight and which they ought to know about, namely

their own soul. The 'shabby little philosopher', *faylasufak*,[157] cognizes things only as shadows on a wall yet seeks, with the aid of philosophical clarifications, to prove God. Thus Mevlana narrates:

A student said in the presence of Shams-i Tabriz: 'I have, with a categorical proof, securely established God's existence.' The next morning our master, Shamsuddin said: 'Last night the angels came down here and blessed that man and said: 'God be praised! He has proved the existence of our God! At least he has done nothing harmful to mortals.'[158]

There are, however, others with whom the traveller on the spiritual path would do better not to fall in with – he should eschew not only the dimwits, the schemers, the over-clever ones but also the pretend Sufis, who shave their heads and look like pumpkins and with their pious chatter quite muddle their poor visitors.[159] Such so-called Sufis are most especially dangerous; one need only look at them to grasp that they do not follow through on the traditional rule, namely: 'Eat little, sleep little, talk little!' Rather, they talk and talk without pause, eat more than 20 people, and sleep like the Seven Sleepers![160] It seems that there have always been such types among the Sufis: thus Jami too (d. 1492), in his *Silsilat al-dhahab*, presented a priceless parody of their way of life; and in the eighteenth century Shah Waliullah (d. 1762), a leading spirit among Indian Muslims, and Mir Dard (d. 1785) criticized the *karamatfurushan* ('miracle-sellers') in order to draw the common people away from them. And to many of them could be fitted the story in the *Mathnavi*, which Mevlana tells with delight:

> A jackal betook himself to a dyer's vat
> and stayed in the vat an hour or so all told.

When he came out, his hide was all colours –
'I am a peacock of Paradise!' he cried.
He saw himself red and yellow and green and blue
and put himself the jackal on show...

Then he addressed his companion:

'Look upon the brightness, the colour, the lustre!
Call me 'pride of the world', call me 'pillar of faith'!
In me blazes the light of God's favour, shining out,
I was of God's brilliance the paraphrase...[161]

But his companion is clever enough to see through him – which cannot be said of all people. It is not to such rainbow-coloured jackals that the seeker should entrust himself but to the genuine friends (*awliya'*) of God, who have attained the highest rank and then can act outside of secondary causes, for they live altogether in their nearness to God.

The man of God is drunken without wine;
The man of God is content without food;
The man of God is ever entranced, amazed,
To the man of God sleep and hunger are show...
The man of God is not from wind or dust.
The man of God is not from fire-shine.
The man of God is unbounded sea,
The man of God alone gives pearls...
The man of God has knowledge only through God;
The man of God does not know out of books...[162]

It is these men of God who can help others to the purgation, and the seeker owes them absolute obedience, for they are the Masters whose every instruction must be obeyed:

When a child is apprenticed to a tailor, he must obey his master: when he gives him a little piece to patch, he must put the patch

on it, when a hem, then he must sew the hem, when something to be stitched, then that. If he wants to learn the tailor's craft, he must willingly give up his own initiative and follow the instruction of the master.[163]

The same holds for the spiritual leader; for one well knows that, without a leader, a two-day journey takes two hundred years.[164] As to the problem of educating and developing man, one question straightaway stands out: Can man be educated at all? Are not all his acts predestined from pre-eternity? Has he then a free will? Is it not said in respect of deliverance that 'the fortunate one is already fortunate in the mother's womb, the unfortunate one is already unfortunate (that is, condemned to eternal punishment) in the mother's womb'? The question of predestination and free will, which Muslim thinkers had been preoccupied with for centuries, holds also for Mevlana a weighty place, and it is interesting to see how he tries to show both sides of the problem.

On the one hand he constantly emphasizes that everything is, directly, without secondary causes, brought about by God and that man is as a quill in God's finger, and on the other he is always striving to show that man has a free will. For man, as he puts it, is like a camel that is carrying the saddle-pack of 'free will', and he can only ask about it whether he is using this saddle-pack the right way, placing the right load upon it.[165] Mevlana plainly loved a certain story especially, for it appears both in the *Mathnavi*[166] and in *Fihi ma fihi*:

[...] the story of the man who climbed an apricot-tree, shook down the fruits and ate them. The owner of the garden saw him and asked: 'Do you not fear God? Why do you do something so unlawful?' The man said: 'Why should I fear God? The tree

belongs to God and I am God's servant. God's servant has eaten from God's tree...'[167]

But when the owner of the garden had him thrashed and clarified that it was with God's stick, the thief confessed to having acted from his own will, not on the basis of predetermination... Following Mevlana's insight, the hadith 'the Pen has dried' (*qad shaffa l-qalam*) does not mean – as is usually thought – that all that has been inscribed in pre-eternity by the Pen of God is now and for all times valid. No, he interprets the saying in this way – that each good deed will find its reward and each evil deed its punishment – an interpretation that lies many times closer to the Qur'anic statement, that whoever has done even the tiniest good or evil will, at the End, see it (Q. 99). The meaning of the saying about the Pen having dried is not a rigid predetermination of even the smallest human action, indeed of every thought, but the doctrine of just reward or punishment for all human doing. This he reiterates in ever new variations:

If you sow colocynth you cannot reap sugarcane![168]

If one weaves coarse, ugly fabric, one cannot expect the dress made from it to be delicate and beautiful, for one will wear what one has spun and woven.[169]

For this reason, one of Mevlana's favourite traditions is the saying of the Prophet: 'The world is the tilled field for the hereafter'; for whatever man may do in this world will bear fruit in the hereafter. This also holds true if one looks on the world as only 'the dream of one asleep', for then one will see the interpretation of one's dream in the morning splendour of eternity after one's corporeal death. Or, to use a different image of Mevlana's: death will come like a mirror in which one sees oneself, ugly or beautiful, as an ugly

black ('blackened' indeed means 'disgraced') or as a lovely white Turk (in the medieval idiom of the time the epitome of beauty).[170] For death, as Mevlana once said, 'tucked under the arm of man', is an organic part of life, which in some measure one nourishes through one's thoughts and deeds. In a long ghazal wherein he applies a Qur'anic phrase (from Q. 66. 5), he describes how the actions of man follow him in the grave:

> After death your good qualities will run before you;
> Like bright-eyed ladies these qualities promenade, proud therein...
> When you have shed your body, you'll see houris in ranks,
> 'Muslim women, believing women, devout, repentant ladies'
> Countless are your qualities running ahead of your bier [...]
> they will hang upon you as sons and daughters,
> and you will put on robes woven from the warp and woof of your works of obedience...[171]

That is why the education of man is so weighty for Mevlana. In a verse of the *Mathnavi* it is expressed felicitously:

> The ox that does not bow to the yoke is thrashed,
> But it is not punished if it does not fly.[172]

For it is his calling to serve and bear the yoke, and not to fly away. Every man must be dealt with in accordance with his individual possibilities; it is indeed the innate talents and faculties that must be developed to their highest perfection. To recognize that is the teacher's highest calling.

In this context Mevlana develops a type of work ethic. The minister, Mu'inuddin Parvana was a friend of Mevlana's. He had fought against the Mongols and tried to hold them back from Konya. Owing to his by no means consistently straightforward policy, he was taken captive by the Mongols

in 1278, then cooked and eaten... But for all his political activity, the minister would gladly have dedicated a little more to studies of the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions, and he complained during a visit to Mevlana that, regrettably, he found little time for them. Mevlana consoled him by clarifying that these worldly things too would be done for God, and to help him understand something he went on with a simile:

> Take a hot bath. Its heat comes from combustibles like straw, kindling and dung, and similar things. God has provided such means that, although tending to be bad and repellent in form, are in reality a bounty. Like the bath, the man becomes hot and brings benefits to all people.[173]

For he had very little doubt that each and every work that is being done in the world has a positive sense, and serves a noble purpose, even if, most of the time, one can hardly, or not at all, recognize the divine wisdom hidden behind it. The whole world serves God without cease, as the Qur'an repeatedly notes, and Mevlana gladly incorporates this idea: all atoms, as he puts it, are God's army, working according to His will, and in a typical oriental image he sees the world as a tent, which

> is to be set up for the king, and he charges people therewith to erect the tent. One says: 'If I do not braid the tent-cord correctly how will the tent come out correctly?' Another said: 'If I do not make the tent-peg correctly, what will they fasten the rope to?' Each knows that they are all servants of the king... Now if the weaver were to give up weaving in order to become a minister, then the whole world would remain naked and bare. He gets joy from this trade, so he is contented...[174]

For, Mevlana means, where each knows his role in the making of the tent, he will be aware also of his responsibility for his work, and he goes on:

God the Exalted gives to every man satisfaction and happiness in his work, so that he would, even if he were to be a hundred thousand years old, still do the same work. Each day his love in his work grows and he discovers in this trade ever new refinement so that he has ever more joy and delight in it, for 'each group rejoices in their share' (Q. 23. 55), and 'nothing is that does not declare its praise' (Q. 17. 44). The rope-maker has his type of praise, the carpenter who makes the pegs another praise, the manufacturer of tent-spikes another, and the Prophets and saints, who take their place in the tent, have yet another.[175]

That is to say, everyone, through his trade, praises and lauds God according to his style and way. Each work, even if it seems to be contrary to another, signifies a praise of the Creator, and if someone recognizes this world as an expression of the might of God's fashioning, he understands the thousand-and-one praises and is thus led to the Love of the Fashioner. For he recognizes that everything is done for His sake, even if people in general do not understand it. For this reason, Mevlana points out, all men do something in order to satisfy their inclination – they write grammar books and do not know that in doing so they praise God, and they sate their desire with a woman and thus a new living being is born. Everything happens to the praise of God and, in a way perhaps not wholly clear, relates us to Him. Therefore Mevlana teaches the weaver and the minister, the greengrocer and the butcher, to be honest in their work and to realize that whatever they do is a contribution to the all-embracing praise of God.

There is yet another – today perhaps especially significant – aspect of Mevlana's attitude toward the education of man. He reminds us again and again of the Prophetic saying: 'the believer is the mirror of the believer'. Whatever man does, he does it for himself and for another; whatever he sees in another, he should also recognize in himself.

It is recounted that an elephant was led to a fountain so as to drink from it. When he saw himself in the water, he shied away. He assumed that he shied away from another elephant and did not know that he himself was what he ran away from.[176]

That is, he shied away from himself. If one has bad characteristics in oneself, they do not impress, but if one sees those qualities in others, they do arouse. Mevlana says, most starkly:

A man feels no disgust at his own smell and his own abscess. He dips his inflamed hand into the soup and licks his finger without exercising himself in the least. But if he sees a small pimple or half a scratch on another, then he cannot manage his soup and feels disgusted. Bad characteristics are just like pimple and ulcer – if somebody has them himself, it does not distress him, but if he sees them in another, even in a smaller measure, he is distressed and disgusted.[177]

The Gospel saying about seeing the mote in another's eye and not seeing the beam in one's own is rendered here in Mevlana's typically direct style. It is always important first of all to scrutinize oneself, to find out whether the negative qualities that one discovers in one's opposite, are not found also in oneself, so that they do not likewise disturb or irritate one's fellow men. Mevlana expresses this concise Golden Rule, known everywhere in the world, in a simple and lovely image:

If someone speaks good of another, this good comes back to him. It is like one who plants flowers and fragrant herbs around his house. Every time he looks out, he sees flowers and fragrant herbs and is always in paradise. If he is in the habit of speaking good of others, they too speak good of him...

Now if, day and night, you can see flowers and a garden of blossoms and the meadows of Iram – why do you go about amid serpents and thorns? Love every man so that you are always dwelling in a garden amid flowers. If you are every man's enemy, then the image of your enemy stands before you so that you go about, day and night, amid thorns and serpents. For this reason the saints love all men and think good of all. [178]

Mevlana seems to be the ideal teacher; for he has himself passed through all the stages of which he speaks. We saw (above, p. 25, and pp. 64 ff.) how he plays with children and brings them to school, and entrusts them to the teacher 'Love', and that he understands how to transform, with the help of Love, the contrary young soul into a positive force. For it is Love, which restores man, to go forward on the hard, difficult path to God; Love it is that transforms the pebble into a jewel, sour grapes into precious wine.

Mevlana had lived this Love – in the consuming passion that Shams had ignited in him; in the calming friendship with Salahuddin; and then, as he began to dictate the *Mathnavi*, he inclined affectionately to his disciple Husamuddin and so made his experience accessible to others. Purified in the crucible of Love, he knew how to point man to the way – a way that, for us today, is still passable, although most likely no one today has lived and endured through experience such as his and then known how to express it in rapturous poetry.

6

The mysterium of love

Mevlana Rumi as teacher – that is something that even today is still comprehensible to all men, and we thankfully accept his ethical teachings, which are sometimes cast in such a humorous style. But can we truly grasp what it means to be seized by such an experience of Love? How can a man be transformed by so absolute a love, so consumed in its fire that he himself becomes the flame? Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall wrote in his *History of Fine Persian Rhetoric* (1818):

> On the wings of the highest religious rapture – which is exalted above all outer forms of positive religion – worshipping the eternal Being, in perfect withdrawal from all earthly and sensual things, as the purest source of eternal light, Mevlana soars – unlike other lyric poets, even Hafiz, merely over sun and moon but – over time and space, over the creation and fate, over the primordial covenant of predestination, and over the verdict of the universal judgement in infinity, where he melts into one with the eternal Being as eternal worshipper and with the everlasting Love as everlasting lover...[179]

It seems impossible fully to construe the force of the Love that had seized Mevlana, as he himself writes:

Someone asked: 'What is the station of the lover?'
And I said: 'Do not ask about such a thing!
If you become as I am, you will certainly come to see it;
when they call you, then you – you too – will call!' [180]

We can only approach the phenomenon if we more closely reflect on the imagery of Love and thereby avoid lapsing into the error of disassociating this Love from its religious, metaphysical roots and seeing it 'only' as an earthly force manifesting itself in intoxication and music (regrettably often the case in present-day emulation of Rumi).

It is this Love that formed Mevlana, made him into a poet, matured and wholly transmuted him into fire. The ordinary person will hardly ever experience such an all-consuming and yet all-healing Love as Rumi expressed in his verses. He says:

I read the Lover's story day and night – now in my love I am become a story for you.[181]

Love is a pre-eternal light, even if many secular-minded people misconceive it as something sensual (he certainly had experience of such interpretations of his spiritual experiences, to which he gave free expression in often astonishingly sensual images). What then can one say about Love?

The pen hastens in the writing, scarcely pausing –
it came for Love and must straightaway break off.
Understand: a donkey stuck in the mire –
only loving yields an exposition for Love.[182]

This is said at more or less the outset of the *Mathnavi*. Even in a hundred thousand languages one could not describe this power, because it does not permit itself to be contained in any vessel. And yet Love is the force that motivates all – how could grass grow if earth and mountains were not lovers?[183]

The metaphors that Mevlana uses in order to interpret the inexpressible mystery of Love spring from all spheres of life. They pertain very often to the fiery spheres: Love is not only the sun that awakens all things to life, but also a tower which manifests just as light but, within, consists wholly of burning fire. Do not all atoms, through the magnetic force of the sun, that is, of Love, come to cohere and dance around it? And whoever has given himself up wholly to Love as once the martyr-mystic Hallaj did, like the iron in the fire which has forgotten its 'iron' quality and only exclaims: 'I am the fire', just as Hallaj once exclaimed: *ana l-Haqq!* ('I am the Truth').

Love can also appear as an endless ocean, as the life-source, or as a torrent which will purify man of all errors. And it is the wind, which dwells in the springtime of the garden and makes the branches dance; just as it also appears as a tree whose branches lie in pre-eternity and whose roots in boundless eternity, higher than God's throne itself. And if Love in some way represents the 'Tree of Being', in Mevlana's work it can also become the creeper which so thoroughly covers the tree 'man' that he entirely disappears in it. That Mevlana, in another verse, even likens Love to a worm that is hollowing out the tree 'man' until only the outer shell of it remains –

> Of me nothing remains but the name – the rest is He![184]

– indicates his effort somehow to describe the enormous power, 'Love'.

Love appears in his poetry also as a city, as Baghdad, the capital of the Islamic empire, though the roofs and houses of the city 'Love' are built of music and verse.

Again and again, however, the power, indeed the ferocity, of Love is sung:

> Love has gripped my hem and pulls at it
> as a hungry man tugs the corner of the tablecloth...[185]

And Love slaughters the lover like a sacrificial lamb on the Feast day. Indeed, it is even a man-eating monster:

> If Love had a mouth, the whole world would be too small a morsel for it.[186]

Thus Love can appear as a predator, as a black lion, or also a unicorn that impales even an elephant – a frieze on the citadel of Konya that Rumi must have seen almost daily depicts this motif, not rare in the Islamic art of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[187] Crocodile[187] or dragon[189] – nothing is too far-fetched to serve as image for the engulfing power of Love. However, the loveliest image is that of the hunting falcon that carries away man's heart:

> I set traps for the falcon 'Love' –
> with my heart I saw it soaring.[190]

Love can also be imaged to the poet in human form – it is king, robber chieftain, field general of an invincible army, and with its sword it beheads all that exists beside it, or – in an image diffused worldwide – it lets fly an arrow; thus Mevlana sighs:

> With its arrows my liver has become a porcupine's back –
> if only Love had a liver, it would have pity![191]

There are innumerable similes of this kind in Rumi's poetry. Some are modelled on images generally used in Persian poetry, but here and there the similes border on

the grotesque, even absurd. Thus Love appears as a market inspector[192] who confiscates everything accessible (something that, at the time, was associated as a rule with torture), or as a judge who collects taxes – but how could a village lying in ruins, as lies the heart of the lover, ever pay taxes? Love comes also as a highwayman, because it deprives the poor wanderer of everything and leaves him behind naked. Under such conditions the pickpocket 'Love' means: 'Is my boundless Love not enough for you?' In Mevlana's verses Love can even appear as a rag-and-boner, for it takes away from people all old worldly goods and cries – in the relevant verse actually in Turkish – 'Who still has old shoes?'[193]

Love can appear under the symbol of one of the trades: as carpenter it builds a ladder to heaven;[194] and as laundry-man it ill-treats people (laundry was, as still today in India, always vigorously lashed on stones by the riverside). And of course Love is a cook, and thanks to its endeavours the raw becomes cooked; the pot 'heart' stands over its fire enabling the ingredients to become edible. Images from the sphere of the kitchen are found in abundance, and one should bear in mind that even a youth who wanted to join the Mevlevi order would be 'cooked' for 1001 days, that is, by labouring in the kitchen of the convent and, at the same time, being initiated in the poetry, music and dance of Mevlana.

Love can of course also be a tailor[195] who cuts off old relations and sews new clothes, or a weaver who, from the lover's tears of blood weaves silk robes or a saddle-cloth for the heavenly mount, Buraq.[196] That Love also appears as a physician is common in oriental poetry –

> O you, my Galen and Plato![197]

– so Rumi hails Love at the beginning of the *Mathnavi.*

Self-evidently, each of the prophets mentioned in the Qur'an can stand as a symbol of the power of Love. Frequently mentioned is Moses,[198] whose staff miraculously transformed into a serpent that devoured the staff-serpents of Pharaoh's sorcerers: so also can Love transform the lifeless into lovers. Especially important is the association of Love with Yusuf, the beautiful Joseph,[199] who generally appears as the goal of Love, namely absolute beauty. Jesus,[200] as the one who gave life to the dead, is the corresponding image for the life-giving force of Love; so too David,[201] in whose hand iron became soft, as the heart does in Love's hand. And similarly Solomon mastered the animals and jinn.[202] That the Prophet Muhammad is the most welcome manifestation of Love is self-evident for the Muslim mystic:

> Love comes like Mustafa among the unbelievers![203]

Female symbols for Love are also used – the mother, the archetypal virgin, Maryam.[204] Who would not gladly suck at the breast of Love or, as a dying child, die in the lap of Love?[205] And Mevlana reminds us that the child is indeed the outcome of Love, because Love, itself without hand and foot, gave hand and foot to the being-to-be when its parents united in love.[206] However, soothing and comforting images are rare.

Self-sacrifice and suffering are the most important marks of Love; for through suffering souls become purified. Suffering signifies continuous renewal, death leads to new life.

Love is the great alchemy, and all suffering is nothing but a vessel in which ignoble matter is slowly and painfully transmuted into gold:

The bitter through Love becomes sweet and mild,
The copper through Love becomes pure gold,
The yeast through Love becomes pure and clear;
To sickness Love offers the gift of health.
The sleeper through Love wakens to life,
Kings through Love become slaves.
Love gives to lifeless bread a soul,
Makes the transient everlasting, the soul![207]

Yet, such a transformation through suffering is only one, albeit a highly important, aspect of Love. The lover is so overwhelmed by it that his state is virtually a continuous intoxication – innumerable verses of Mevlana's on the operation of this soul-wine originate from this sphere. This intoxication – the one known to Mevlana – comes from a beaker filled with affliction and Love carries this very beaker in its hand. Man appears to be so brim-filled with this Love that he no longer fits his own robes and must loosen his belt – thus Mevlana writes of the state of God's plenitude. He yearns again and again for the tavern, for the everlasting Beloved or the manifestation of Love. Indeed, the intoxication in which he is thoroughly immersed endures to his death:

If from my dust wheat should sprout –
you bake bread therefrom, drunkenness grows,
dough and baker become entirely possessed
and the oven sings drunken rhymes...
I am intoxication, the wine of Love my source –
Say, what save intoxication can come from me?[208]

Such a Love naturally cannot be measured or understood at all by the intellect:

Love grew bonny and plump and well-nourished,
while understanding emaciated.[209]

Could the great jurists, the founders of the schools of law, namely Abu Hanifa (d. 767) and Shafiʿi (d. 820) have known something of Love or taught it at all, he asks in a verse adopted from Sanaʾi.[210] For the intellectuals, in their apprehension, run away from a dead ant, while the lovers tread without a care on dragons. Mevlana alludes repeatedly to the contradistinction between *khabar* 'information' and *nazar* 'immediate seeing'; the intellect reads and learns, its snack-foods are tradition and analogy, while Love is pure seeing. And if Love, behind the veils of blood, possesses a rose-garden, the intellect sees only the visible world and strives towards useful, tangible outcomes. For sure, intellect or understanding is necessary, to lead man on the right way toward the goal, but he needs must enter the bridal chamber of Love. Rumi has presented, above all in his early poetry, precious descriptions of the confrontation between Love and intellect – he sees the judge 'Intellect' in the court-room sitting drunk on his bench because the preacher 'Love' has entered the room. Even if Intellect in himself is a true Plato, Love coshes him on the head or hangs him on the spot, even though he was previously the master. But when he eats a little grain of opium, which Love has set in the trap, he straightaway loses his fine plumage and crawls about helpless in Love's inner court.[211] Indeed, Love would take him so far that, each morning, he clambers 'onto the roof of his brains and plays the lute...'[212]

Such contexts lead to the equation of Love and madness. Did not Majnun in his love for Layla wander about in endless wastes after he had left the city of understanding behind him?

In a bold verse, Mevlana sings:

> Love is free from the narrowness of the prayer-niche and of the cross[213]

For Love takes man to the wellspring of all life, where there is no more differentiation; it makes it easy for him to turn back to his eternal home, to what – knowingly or unknowingly – he has always yearned for. In ravishing verses he pictures how the voice of Love calls him and his companions to the journey. So he lives through his heavenly journey and reaches pre-eternity, the source of the divine address, *a-lastu bi-rabbi-kum?* 'Am I not your Lord?', and as the ship of the body breaks apart he lives through the consummation. Mevlana knows that in Love are concealed the two opposed divine attributes – 'He who gives life', 'He who lets die'. One must die from the whole world, willingly surrender one's existence and one's own will. The Prophetic saying, 'Die before you die', sweeps through his poetry just as, again, does the death-song of Hallaj:

Kill me, O my Friend.

Is it not strange, what happens to the lover?

The lovers are weird –
the more they would be dead, the more living they are![214]

For death is rejuvenation, it is the step to eternal life. Rumi saw this secret everywhere. He narrates about the lover who went on at great length about his beloved, what he had done for her, and nevertheless she found that he has not fulfilled his duty as lover, has not reached the foundation of Love:

To die, not to be, that is the foundation!

And the lover learns this lesson:

He sank and straightaway gave up his soul,
made happy and smiling, like a rose.[215]

First of all when the lover, in the pain of Love, in longing and suffering, has become entirely not-himself, when he sees nothing more than the beloved Being, the beloved God, he experiences the longed-for unity, as is said in one of the most celebrated stories in the *Mathnavi*:

A man knocked at the gate of the Friend.
'Who are you' – said the Friend – 'who stands there?'
He said: 'I!' He said: 'Then take yourself off –
no spot at this table for the raw-uncooked!
The fire, 'pain of separation', it is that cooks
the uncooked, that frees him from hypocrisy!'
For a year the poor man went travelling,
and burnt in sparks of separation all over.
Matured, the burnt one came from the journey
back again, circling about the Friend's house.
He knocked at the door with hundred-fold care,
that no thoughtless little word escape him:
Then the Friend called: 'Who stands before the door?'
He said: 'You, Beloved, stand before the door!'
'Now, now that you are I, come in, O I –
Two I's this narrow house does not contain!'[216]

The secret of this death and resurrection lies in the dance which passes through all creatures, from the atom to the spheres. Everything is in the circling dance of becoming, passing, and re-becoming on a higher plane. Mevlana symbolized this secret in the *sema*, in the circling dance, which has become distinctive of the Mevlevis. Friedrich Rückert, who in 1820 published (albeit in somewhat free translation) 24 very beautiful ghazals from Mevlana's Divan, inserted among these poems a ghazal that did not originate from Mevlana but which best renders the mystery, just as it is symbolized in the circling dance, of life and death:

Who knows love's mazy circling, ever lives in God,
For death, he knows, is love abounding: *Allah Hu!*[217]

What does Rumi's work mean to us?

What does the work of Jalaluddin Rumi mean to a man of modern times from another culture? Is it enough that we unravel it symbol for symbol with the techniques of philology, that we make a scholarly investigation of verse structure and rhyme-scheme? Or is it right to forge, out of the merely academically correct prose-translation of the leading Rumi scholar, R. A. Nicholson, a second- and third-hand rendering which still has hardly anything to do with the original, indeed would transform Rumi's imagery and his lofty flights of thought into expressions of a generally mystical or would-be mystical attitude? It must be tempting to put on the market a mystical poet – whose work has been for centuries the spiritual nourishment of millions from the Persian–Turkish region to India, and whose thought has lately become better known in the Arab world – as one of umpteen poets who suit our age, who speak of love, wine, ecstatic freedom, and other pleasant things, and into whose verse one can read one's own ideas, for there are indeed very few people who are able to check the original.

That seems to me a dangerous way to go. If the modern 'apostles' of Rumi referred to their verses as 'inspired by Rumi', it would be correct and unobjectionable; but they are not true translations and true translation is not a straightforward matter – even though there exist dozens of renderings of the *Mathnavi* in oriental languages, which in many cases retain the metre of the major works. German, English, and French translations, insofar as they exist at all, cannot, despite best intentions, render the literary charm of the original or the very profound interpretations of Qur'anic citations in the poetry. Basically, every verse needs a commentary – above all for the Western reader – for the *Mathnavi* is woven out of many diverse strands. It is, as was once said, like a rope, through which a red strand runs, sometimes conspicuous and easy to recognize, sometimes less conspicuous. However, if one unravels the strands, the work falls apart, and the subtle coherence of form and content becomes invisible. Anyhow, it should be possible to interpret Mevlana's work for our time, to make its incalculable worth sufficiently well-known.

Perhaps that would happen most easily for the Western reader if he enters patiently upon the basic teaching of Mevlana: if he learns from him how warily one must forge ahead on the path of God, without neglecting the prescribed duties. Innumerable anecdotes and stories in the *Mathnavi* and in *Fihi ma fihi*, indeed even in the ecstatic lyrics of the *Divan*, show what an inspired teacher Mevlana was. Though he knows that one can do nothing against the power of divine Love, he nevertheless always alludes to the necessary outward form – the right discipline in every glance and respect for the teacher being pre-eminent overall. However, what seems to me especially important and charming is the poet's art generally, his skill in discovering, in the smallest and seemingly least

important being, a clue which points to the Exalted. Man must learn to recognize the signs of God, and in this we are not dependent on medieval oriental examples – we ourselves can do the same every day and hour. If Mevlana lived in our epoch, then modern technological developments would also furnish material for the language of his images. I can conjecture that an escalator would animate the thought that such a staircase carries man to the top quite without assistance from himself, but that he more quickly finds the way to the higher plane if he himself strives, himself climbs on it. Perhaps the crowd at an airport would be an apposite image for the resurrection (*qiyama*, 'resurrection' is anyhow a modern term for 'chaotic human bustle') – the cry resounds, the books are checked (see Q. 84), the works weighed (Q. 101); one is screened and then waits to get to heaven. And the computer would serve as a symbol for 'the well-preserved tablet', whose owner (God-like) knows what shall be inscribed, whereas the computer chips do not know in what configuration they will appear. I can conjecture that such images could appear in the poetry of Mevlana – granted the assumption that he would look upon them all as signs of the inaccessibility to man of God's works. Just as he observes the ants on the beautiful illuminated manuscript and clearly establishes that the letters are indeed not – as the foolish little animals suppose – formed by the pen or the hand, but ultimately by the guiding force that stands over all, so today he would draw similar conclusions.

Perhaps Mevlana's way of seeing opens, for some people in the modern age, a new door to understanding the wonder of nature and of technology.

What Mevlana experienced was the primordial power of Love, which carried him away above all the spheres. But what

is so admirable is that he did not lose himself in abstraction when he sought, at least by indications, to put across his experiences. The language of his imagery is, throughout, rooted in daily life, so that it succeeds in attaching, for all men, the inexpressible to comprehensible images, because he saw all things in the world as signs, as clues, to the higher reality. Therefore, he could also draw on paradoxes, even obscene stories, to set out his experiences. For mystics of all religions have known that the highest secret only allows itself to be conveyed through paradoxes and oxymorons. His whole work is the effort to convey the secret of the experience of Love, as is said at the beginning of the *Mathnavi*:

> In legends and tales from days gone by
> the Friend's secret lets itself be more lightly told.[218]

Here he has shown his mastery. For his life is the ideal model for the development of a spiritual leader. Burnt up in the uplifting purifying flames of an unaccountable, demanding love for Shamsuddin, he did not remain on that high glowing peak, in the station of disappearance in the Beloved; no, he was lucky enough to find a mirror in the simple goldsmith Salahuddin, in whose unquestioning friendship he slowly came back to himself, in whom his station normalized a little, so that then in the friendship of his disciple Husamuddin he would again turn to the world and from being the lover become again the teacher. He had attained *fana'*, the disappearance in the Beloved, and, had he been an inferior being, he could have remained there, on the summit of ecstasy. But he went further and lived in the station that the Sufi masters call *baqa'* ('abiding'), wherein he is united with the divine Beloved in disappearance without dissolution, now he acts on earth, in the world, without ever

losing his unity with Him; he lives and teaches in the world which, however, is now for him quite transformed. Mevlana has passed through the mystical half-circle – rising up and become a glowing flame, a suffusing light, and finally, the loving affection for his disciples, whom he lets share his experience of Love as far as their understanding permits. Thus he becomes the Master par excellence, to follow whom seems impossible but who remains a model.

Mevlana has been seen by many interpreters as a pantheist. That seems to me just as wrong as the constant interpretations of his work in the light of the theosophy of Ibn ʿArabi. He is a lover, whose life is rooted in his absolute love for God, the One, the Creator of all things, for that God whose work is everywhere, even in the apparently irreconcilable opposites of the created world, visible and palpable. Mevlana's work lives out of this unwavering faith in the Creator-God, who can be equated with creative Love, and so he always leads his hearers and readers back to the source of Being. And he believes firmly in God's grace, which draws man to itself, as is explicit in the story of the poor schoolmaster who, shivering in extreme hardship and cold, sees a bear in the stream. The schoolchildren call out to him to seize the fur coat which they take the bear to be. And the desperate teacher indeed jumps into the water where the bear grapples him. The appalled children call out to him to let go the fur coat. But he cries:

> I am well and truly letting go of the fur coat, but the fur coat is not letting go of me![219]

How indeed could God's grace let us go?

Mevlana sees God in all manifestations, which veil over His absolute Oneness as the eye of the creature is not fitted

to perceive such Oneness. Pure light, perceived only in 'the disturbed reflection', is too strong to be sensed.

For me the most lovely and instructive testimony of Mevlana's approach is this late piece from the sixth book of the *Mathnavi*, which probably came into being only a few months before his death. Zulaykha, the lover, is the mouthpiece for what Mevlana had been feeling ever since his encounter with Shams-i Tabriz – that the lover knows only one goal and sees, hears, senses the beloved being everywhere. Thinking of the beloved – and here the beloved is God – brings the heart to serenity, for 'truly, in thinking of God do hearts become still' (Q. 13. 27). So Zulaykha is purified in the grief for Yusuf, the symbol of Mevlana himself, and can serve as the model for that loving man who was fit to perceive the divine Love that is everywhere in the world:

Zulaykha, look, gave to everything – from rue
to aloes-wood – the name 'Yusuf'.
In all names she concealed his name,
let only her confidantes know this.
And if she said: 'The wax softens from the fire',
she meant: 'The Friend softens toward me!'
And if she said: 'Look, how the moon is rising there!'
And if she said: 'The willow-branch has become green!'
And if she said: 'How the leaves quiver!'
And if she said: 'How brightly the rue burns!'
And if she said: 'The nightingale spoke to the rose!'
And if she said: 'The prince uncovered the secret!'
And if she said: 'How splendidly fortune beams!'
And if she said: 'Beat the rug out for me!'
And if she said: 'The porter has brought water!'
And if she said: 'Look, the sun has risen!'
And if she said: 'Yesterday they cooked well!'
And if she said: 'The greens are now just right!'

And if she said: 'The bread does need some salt!'
And if she said: 'The sky is turning the wrong way!'
And if she said: 'Now my head is aching so!'
And if she said: 'My headache has gone away!'
If praised, she said, 'His embraces.'
If blamed, she called it 'Separation'.
And if she heaped up a hundred thousand names,
she meant Yusuf, intended only Yusuf.
Were she hungry and said his name,
she'd be satisfied, drunken from his cup.
He, a fur-coat for her in time of cold –
that the Friend does in Love![220]

Bibliographical information

The literature on Mevlana Jalaluddin is all but impossible to survey. The starting point of any serious undertaking of such a task must be the original Persian text. The *Mathnavi* is available in the solid edition by Reynold A. Nicholson, with translation and commentary (8 volumes, London–Leiden, 1925–1940). The translation, philologically correct, leaves little sense of the poetic sweep of the original. No complete translation in German is available. In 1849, Georg Rosen published a verse rendering of one part of the first book of the *Mathnavi*, which was edited by his son Friedrich Rosen in 1913. One German prose translation, in appearance comprehensible, unfortunately leaves much to be desired. One desideratum would be a truly poetic German translation – which does not necessarily imply, composed in verse – with copious annotations that not only take account of the countless allusions to the Qur'an, hadith, and other classical texts, but familiarize the reader with the unique linguistic features of the works.

Rumi's lyrical poetry, the *Divan-i kabir* or the *Divan-i Shams-i Tabriz*, is edited by the indefatigable Persian scholar

Badiʿuzzaman Furuzanfar (Tehran, 1957–1975). This ten-volume edition comprises the ghazals and the quatrains, thus including around 40,000 lines of lyric poetry, according to the breakdown of the material. In German and other European languages only select anthologies are available. The first and, because it has an accompanying Persian text and numerous notes, still the best anthology is Reynold A. Nicholson's *Selected Poems from the Divan-i Shams-i Tabriz* (1898). There are more poetic renderings by A. J. Arberry, Annemarie Schimmel, J. C. Bürgel; also worthy of mention are the French translations of Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch. The very free, extraordinarily popular, 'adaptive renderings' in the English-speaking world, above all in the USA, which in our time have grafted on Rumi an unexpected celebrity, take the major poems out of the Islamic-mystic context and turn him into an ecstatic poet detached from his roots, who as preacher of universal Love has become, quite simply, a cult-figure in American colleges.

The prose work, *Fihi ma fihi*, in turn edited by Furuzanfar, is often reprinted. It is available in Turkish, French (Meyerovitch), English (Arberry), and German (Schimmel) translations. This work is an important supplement to the poetry and shows Mevlana as teacher and – in part critical – observer of his age.

Aflaki's *Manaqib al-ʿarifin*, stories and anecdotes about Rumi and his circle, has appeared in a French translation by Clément Huart (1918–22). This work merits, at least in a light, shortened form, a German translation. Turkish translations are available.

It is not surprising that Mevlana Rumi's work has had a great influence on Turkish literature, that for centuries there have been poetic renderings of the *Mathnavi* in Turkish as

also modern adaptations of these works like the ghazals – he is the mystic buried in Konya and is for many Turks, quite simply, a national saint. But as the great majority of the people no longer understand Persian – once the language of higher education – it is inevitable that ever new Turkish adaptations and introductions should be made (e.g. Abdulbaki Gölpinarli, Meliha Tarikahya, Mehmet Önder, and many others).

Works about Mevlana in the Persophone region – Iran, Aghanistan, Tajikistan, India – are extraordinarily numerous. As the mystic poet was born in Balkh (present-day Afghanistan), he was often hailed in the eastern lands of Islam as 'Balkhi' and not 'Rumi'. The most important poems and teachings have been expounded, commented upon, and analysed, and his images woven into their own work. In present-day Iran, alongside the aforementioned B. Furuzanfar, Abdul Karim Soroush is referred to above all.

Rumi's influence in the Indian subcontinent has been especially strong. Here his work, notably in the first half of the fourteenth century, became well-known and, over the course of the centuries, loved not only by Muslims but also by Hindus. Above all, in the Mughal period (1526–1857), numerous commentaries on his *Mathnavi* came into being; there is scarcely a single work in Persian – and, later, in Urdu – that does not show traces of the preoccupation with him. The written commentary on the *Mathnavi* by the Indian scholar Bahr al-ʿUlum (d. 1810) seemed to R. A. Nicholson to be the best interpretation of the major works. In the twentieth century, the Indian Muslim poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) found in Rumi his *chidr-i rah*, his spiritual leader, and he interpreted him afresh as the preachėr of dynamic Love, and not, as he has been seen for centuries long, in the light of the theosophy of Ibn ʿArabi

(d. 1240). Also not lacking is the influence of Rumi's ideas and phraseology on most Indian languages, like Sindhi, Punjabi, and Pashto, as also Bengali: for the great Sindhi poet Shah Abdul-Latif Bhitaʾi (d. 1752), the *Mathnavi* was (as it was for many of his countrymen) the source of his inspiration – had Jami (d. 1492) not hailed it as 'the Qurʾan in the Persian tongue'? In the Arab world, however, it became known only slowly, thanks to a few studies and translations.

Numerous works on Mevlana Rumi, above all learned studies and articles, are found in European languages. One thinks of the essays of Helmut Ritter, the comprehensive work on Mevlana's father, Baha-i Valad, by Fritz Meier, and recently in the USA, William C. Chittick's *The Sufi Path of Love*. Mevlana has inspired Russian and Swedish, Czech and Italian scholars. In this way at least some aspects of his world of ideas have become known to literary historians and, especially important, to historians of religion, so that one frequently finds certain quotations from his work (like the story about the apparently unanswered prayer) in the scholarly literature of religion, after the Protestant theologian F. A. D. Tholuck had first dealt with them in 1821.

The music of the Mevlevi order has become widely known in recent decades, and the *sema*, the circling dance of the dervishes, has not only inspired numerous admirers – often without sufficient knowledge of the spiritual roots of this ritual – to dedicate themselves to 'Sufi dance', it has also motivated artists to depict it. Among these Ingrid Schaar's Mevlevi drawings are striking.

Annemarie Schimmel has made Mevlana Rumi's work known in the West through *The Triumphal Sun* (which has also appeared in Persian), *Ich bin Wind und du bist Feuer*, and numerous other books and essays.

The richness of this legacy is set out in a book that can be recommended to every Rumi lover: Franklin D. Lewis' *Rumi. Past and Present, East and West. The Life, Teaching and Poetry of Jalal al-Din Rumi* (Oxford, 2000). This serious, almost 700-page book tries, in the most lucid language, to list and describe all the available material. Anyone who earnestly wishes to tackle the work and impact of Mevlana Jalaluddin will find here a useful guide to 'Rumi-ology' – if I may use the term – and discover how many possible ways there are to understand his work or, at least, to get somewhat nearer to him.

For what he, so removed by Love, once said of his beloved applies to himself:

I see your beauty entirely
    I close my eyes and close
My mouth, I shall drink
    never again your wine.
I am banned from talk
    with men in the world –
But if you are talked about,
    my speech will then be long!

Notes

Almost all of the notes given below have been derived from citations in other studies of Rumi by Annemarie Schimmel, principally *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalāloddin Rumi* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993). The few that are not culled from Schimmel's other works are enclosed in square brackets, to indicate translator's interpolation. Where lines from the *Mathnavi* are cited, we have added a reference to the most easily accessed printing of the English translation by R. A. Nicholson, which Schimmel described as 'philologically correct'. The publications repeatedly cited are identified by short title as follows:

Divan: Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz. Ed. Badiᶜ al-Zamān Furūzānfar. Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Tehran, 10 vols., 1957–67. [The individual poems are identified by number.]

Divan–T: the *tarjiᶜ* bands in *Divan.*

Divan–S: Nicholson's parallel text translation of selected poems from *Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz*, some of which are not found in *Divan*: *Selected Poems from the Dīvān-i Shams-i*

Tabrīz of Jalaluddin Rumi, inroduced, translated and annotated by Reynold A. Nicholson (first published 1898; repr. Cambridge University Press, 1952).

*Mathnavi: The Mathnawī of Jalālu'ddīn Rumī. Ed. and transl. with critical notes and commentary by Reynold A. Nicholson.*London: Luzac, 8 vols., 1925–40. [The Book number is given in upper case Roman numerals, followed by verse number.]

Nicholson: The Mathnawí of Jalálu'ddín Rúmí. Ed. with critical notes, translation, & commentary by Reynold A. Nicholson. Published by the Cambridge University Press for the E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust [1926], 1982; vol. ii: Nicholson's transl. of Books I and II; vol. iv: his transl. of Books III and IV; vol. vi: his transl. of Books V and VI. [The volume number is given in lower case Roman numerals, followed by page number.]

Discourses: Discourses of Rumi by Arthur J. Arberry (London: Curzon, repr. 1993 [1967]): an English translation of the miscellany of prose texts collected in Rumi's *Fīhi mā fīhi.* [A more recent translation, with the same numbering, is: Wheeler M. Thackston Jr., *Signs of the Unseen: The Discourses of Jalaluddin Rumi* (Boston/London: Shambhala, 1999).]

Rubaᶜiyyat: *Rubāᶜiyyāt*, being volume 8 of *Divan.*

Rubaᶜiyyat–E: Rubāᶜiyyāt, ms. Esad Efendi, no. 2693 (Istanbul). [Ghazals not included in *Divan.*]

Valadname: Sulṭān Valad, *Valadnāme.* Ed. Jalāl Humāʾi. Tehran, 1936.

Notes to Foreword, pages ix–xii

1 For an extended discussion, see Schimmel, *Triumphal Sun*, pp. 382–7.

2 ['Mevlana' by Nazim Hikmet in Kerim Sadi, *Nazim Hikmet'in Sürleri* (Istanbul: May, 1969), p. 81.]

3 H. von Hofmannstahl, 'Gedenkwort für Sebastian Melmoth'. [See 'Sebastian Melmoth' in J. D. McClatchy (ed.), *The Whole Difference: Selected Writings of Hugo von Hofmannstahl* (transl. Tania and James Stern; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 143–6.]

4 Iqbal's *javāb* was called *Payām-i mashriq* (The Message of the East; Lahore, 1923; p. 246), which Schimmel translated as *Botschaft des Ostens* (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 1963; p. 97).

5 [The verse alluded to is *Mathnavi*, IV. 1402. *Nicholson*, iv. p. 49: 'He that is blessed and familiar (with spiritual mysteries) knows that intelligence is of Iblis, while love is of Adam'.]

6 ['Ismail Dede'nin Kainati' in Yahya Kemal Beyatli, *Eski Sürin Ruzgariyle* (Istanbul: Istanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, 5th edn., 1993), p. 49.]

Notes to Chapter 1, pages 1–14

7 *Divan*, 1007.

8 *Divan*, 2669.

9 *Rubaiʿyyat–E*, 327 a5.

10 *Divan*, 1081.

11 *Valadname*, p. 49.

12 *Valadname*, pp. 59–61, esp. p. 60; see also, p. 290.

13 *Mathnavi*, I. 1 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 5].

14 *Mathnavi*, I. 135 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 11].

15 [The reference to *Mathnavi*, II. 1458 for this citation, as given in Schimmel, *Rumi. Ich bin Wind und du bist Feuer: Leben und Werk des grossen Mystikers* (Düsseldorf, Köln: Diederichs, 1980, p. 41, n. 84) does not appear to be correct.]

16 [Literally, 'In it is what is in it'. In her studies in English Schimmel's references to this prose miscellany of Rumi's reflections, exhortations, and advice cite Arberry's translation (*Discourses*), but her translations differ slightly from Arberry's.]

17 *Divan*, 911.

Notes to Chapter 2, pages 15–27

18 *Discourses*, no. 16, p. 85.
19 *Divan*, 1949.
20 *Mathnavi*, VI. 2652 [*Nicholson*, vi. pp. 404–5].
21 Louis Massignon, 'Le Divan d'al-Ḥallāj, essai de reconstitution', *Journal Asiatique*, 218–19 (1931), *qaṣīda* 10.
22 *Ruba'iyyat–E*, 328 a2.
23 *Divan*, 895; cf. *Mathnavi*, VI. 160 [*Nicholson*, vi. p. 266].
24 *Divan*, 2120; 2960.
25 *Mathnavi*, I. 141 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 11].
26 *Divan*, 310.
27 *Divan*, 2937.
28 *Ruba'iyat*, 142. Cf. *Mathnavi*, II. 2233 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 337]; III. 4199 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 235]; V. 1892 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 113]; VI. 3561 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 454]; *Divan*, 735, 1866, 2138.
29 *Mathnavi*, IV. 3068, 3078 [*Nicholson*, iv. pp. 441, 442]).
30 *Mathnavi*, IV. 2628 [*Nicholson*, iv. pp. 417–18].
31 Respectively, *Mathnavi*, I. 247 [*Nicholson*, ii. pp. 17–21], and I. 1547 [*Nicholson*, ii. pp. 85–101].
32 *Mathnavi*, II. 2084, 3350 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 329, 395]; III. 3620 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 203]; VI. 3393 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 445]. *Divan*, 452; 1211; 1612; 2928.
33 *Mathnavi*, II. 2322 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 341]; V. 303 [*Nicholson*, vi. p. 20]; on the silkworm, *Divan*. 651; 3134; 1372; *Mathnavi*, I. 1011 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 57]; IV. 2537 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 412].
34 *Discourses*, no. 50, p. 195.
35 First line of 'Selige Sehnsucht', in Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan*, which can be read on line: www.kalliope.org/da/digt.pl?longdid=goethe 2000082806.
36 *Divan,* 1832. [In *Triumphal Sun* (p. 216) Schimmel renders these lines as follows:
A call reached Not-Being; Not-Being said: 'Yes (*balā*),
I shall put my foot on that side, fresh and green and joyful!'
It heard the *a-last*, it came forth running and intoxicated,
It was Not-Being and became Being (manifested in) tulips and willows and sweet basil.]

Notes to Chapter 3, pages 28–29

37 *Valadname*, p. 212 f.
38 *Discourses*, no. 44, p. 173.

Notes to Chapter 4, pages 30–54

39 *Discourses*, no. 7, p. 41 f.
40 *Mathnavi*, IV. 3721 [*Nicholson*, iv. pp. 476–8].
41 *Divan*, 1005; 1158; 3029; 3041; *Mathnavi*, VI. 1739 [*Nicholson*, vi. p. 355].
42 *Divan*, 2591; *Mathnavi*, III. 2903 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 163]; VI. 2010 [*Nicholson*, vi. p. 370]; *Discourses*, no. 6, p. 38.
43 *Discourses*, no. 25, p. 118.
44 Rudolf Otto, *Die Heilige* (1917) [translated by John W. Harvey as *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1932] 2nd edn., 1958), chs. 5–6.]
45 Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relations in Islamic Thought* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992).
46 *Divan*, 2530.
47 In *Moganni Nameh*: *Buch des Sängers*, 'Talismane'.
48 *Discourses*, no. 7, p. 43.
49 *Mathnavi*, I. 1066 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 60: 'The understanding says, like Gabriel, "O Aḥmad, if I take one (more) step), it will burn me; / Do thou leave me, henceforth advance (alone): this is my limit, O sultan of the soul!" ']
50 *Divan*, 900.
51 *Divan*, 649. See *Divan-S*, no. 19, pp. 77–8.
52 *Mathnavi*, III. 3901, 3906 [*Nicholson*, iv. pp. 218–19].
53 *Mathnavi*, VI. 1222; 1270 [*Nicholson*, vi. pp. 326–7; 329–30].
54 *Divan*, 2776.
55 *Mathnavi*, V. 1686 [*Nicholson*, vi. p. 102].
56 *Mathnavi*, VI. 858 [*Nicholson*, vi. p. 306].
57 *Divan*, 2131; 1414.
58 [See A. J. Arberry, *Tales from the Masnavi* (London: Curzon Press, 1994), p. 258.]
59 *Mathnavi*, III. 3700 [*Nicholson*, iv. pp. 207–12].

60 *Mathnavi*, VI. 4020 [*Nicholson*, vi. pp. 480–1].
61 *Divan*, 1602.
62 *Divan*, 925.
63 *Divan*, 2520.
64 *Divan*, 617.
65 *Divan*, 2764.
66 *Mathnavi*, III. 189 [*Nicholson*, iv. pp. 14–15].
67 *Divan*, 903; 942.
68 *Mathnavi*, III. 3033 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 170].
69 *Divan*, 3038.
70 *Divan*, 2046.
71 *Discourses*, no. 45, p. 183.
72 *Mathnavi*, IV. 11 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 273].
73 *Divan*, 940; *Mathnavi*, VI. 2665 [*Nicholson*, vi. p. 405–10].
74 *Divan*, 2831.
75 *Mathnavi*, III. 2374 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 132].
76 *Mathnavi*, VI. 2305 [*Nicholson*, vi. pp. 386–8].
77 *Mathnavi*, V. 2311 [*Nicholson*, vi. p. 139].
78 *Mathnavi*, III. 203 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 15].
79 *Mathnavi*, VI. 4228 [*Nicholson*, iv. pp. 491–2].
80 *Mathnavi*, I. 2083 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 113].
81 *Mathnavi*, II. 1720 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 310].
82 *Mathnavi*, II. 1797 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 314].
83 *Mathnavi*, V. 3165 [*Nicholson*, vi. p. 191].
84 *Mathnavi*, II. 139 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 229].
85 *Mathnavi*, IV. 81 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 277].
86 *Divan*, 1633.
87 *Divan*, 805.
88 *Divan*, 927; 581; 1000.
89 *Divan*, 741; *Mathnavi*, II. 3753 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 416].
90 *Mathnavi*, II. 691 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 257].
91 *Mathnavi*, I. 1578 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 87, which differs much from the translation here].
92 *Mathnavi*, I. 1741 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 95].
93 *Mathnavi*, II. 2449 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 348].
94 *Divan*, 583.
95 *Mathnavi*, III. 2217 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 124].
96 *Discourses*, no. 4, p. 24.

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97 [*Nicholson*, iv. pp. 85–7.]
98 *Discourses*, no. 42, p. 164.
99 *Muthnavi*, II. 203 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 232], completed in *Mathnavi*, V. 2518 [*Nicholson*, vi. p. 152).
100 *Discourses*, no. 38, p. 152.
101 *Mathnavi*, VI. 4897 [*Nicholson*, vi. p. 528].
102 *Mathnavi*, III. 53 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 7].
103 *Discourses*, no. 52, p. 203.
104 *Divan*, 1472. 105; *Mathnavi*, III. 3637 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 204].
106 *Divan*, 1657.
107 *Discourses*, no. 18, p. 93.
108 *Discourses*, no. 31, p. 141.
109 [*Nicholson*, vi. p. 133.]
110 *Divan*, 2782; 1006.
111 *Mathnavi*, VI. 2632 [*Nicholson*, vi. 403–5].
112 *Mathnavi*, IV. 3621 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 471].
113 *Mathnavi*, IV. 3621 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 471].
114 E.g. *Mathnavi*, I. 115 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 10); II. 729 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 259]; III. 4013 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 225]; IV. 464 [*Nicholson*, iv, p. 297]; *Divan*, 298; 666; 1921.
115 *Divan*, 465; 538.
116 *Mathnavi*, III. 2554 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 143].
117 *Divan*, 1353.
118 E.g. *Divan*, 268, 1440; see also *Discourses*, no. 26, p. 123.
119 *Divan*, 922.
120 *Divan–T*, 11; *Ruba'iyyat*, 676.
121 *Divan*, 2142.
122 *Discourses*, no. 48, p. 189.
123 *Discourses*, no. 48, p. 190.
124 *Discourses*, no. 16, pp. 87–8.
125 *Divan*, 395.
126 *Divan*, 1253.
127 *Divan*, 1069.
128 *Mathnavi*, IV. 1856 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 375].
129 *Divan*, 2015.
130 *Divan*, 1989; 1847; *Mathnavi*, IV. 342 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 91].

131 *Mathnavi*, IV. 102 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 278].
132 *Mathnavi*, I. 1532 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 84); I. 2932 [*Nicholson*, ii. 160); IV. 345 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 291]; IV. 2344 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 401]; IV. 2352 [*Nicholson*, iv. 402].
133 *Mathnavi*, I. 2981 [*Nicholson*, ii. 163–4].
134 *Mathnavi*, III. 4158 [*Nicholson*, iv. pp. 232–4].
135 *Discourses*, no. 5, p. 33.
136 *Divan*, 941; cf. 102.
137 *Mathnavi*, I. 3459 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 188]; II. 72 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 225]; IV. 1852 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 375]; *Divan*, 2031.
138 *Discourses*, no. 32, p. 143.
139 *Discourses*, no. 26, p. 129.
140 *Discourses*, no. 25, p. 118.
141 *Mathnavi*, II. 3767 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 417].
142 *Mathnavi*, III. 3291 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 185].
143 *Divan*, 2622.
144 *Mathnavi*, V. 2547 [*Nicholson*, vi. pp. 153–4].
145 *Divan*, 1172; 1300; 1380; 1817.
146 *Discourses*, no. 54, p. 208. 147 *Discourses*, no. 4, pp. 27–8.
148 *Mathnavi*, V. 363 [*Nicholson*, vi. p. 24].
149 *Divan*, 411.
150 *Divan*, 441; *Mathnavi*, II. 2221 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 336]; V. 2887 [*Nicholson*, vi. pp. 174–5].
151 *Mathnavi*, IV. 2373 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 403].
152 *Mathnavi*, III. 2095 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 117].
153 *Mathnavi*, III. 2595 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 145].
154 *Mathnavi*, III. 2584 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 145, which differs much from the translation here].
155 *Mathnavi*, IV. 3878 [*Nicholson*, vi. pp. 471–2].
156 *Mathnavi*, I. 1088 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 61].
157 *Mathnavi*, I. 3278 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 178].
158 *Discourses*, no. 21, p. 103.
159 *Divan*, 1093; see also *Mathnavi*, V. 3807 [*Nicholson*, vi. pp. 467–8].
160 *Mathnavi*, II. 3508 [*Nicholson*, ii. pp. 403–4].
161 *Mathnavi*, III. 721 [*Nicholson*, iv. pp. 42–3, 45].

162 *Divan–S*, no. 8, p. 29. [Nicholson's translation differs from the one given here.]
163 *Discourses*, no. 12, p. 66.
164 *Mathnavi*, III. 588 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 35].
165 *Mathnavi*, VI. 214 [*Nicholson*, vi. pp. 269–70].
166 *Mathnavi*, V. 3077 [*Nicholson*, vi. p. 185–7].
167 *Discourses*, no. 40, p. 160.
168 *Divan*, 1337; see also *Mathnavi*, II. 1062 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 276).
169 *Mathnavi*, V. 3181 [*Nicholson*, vi. p. 192].
170 *Mathnavi*, III. 3438 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 193]; see *Divan*, 2037.
171 *Divan*, 385; see 402.
172 *Mathnavi*, V. 3102 [*Nicholson*, vi. p. 187].
173 *Discourses*, no. 3, p. 23.
174 *Discourses*, no. 21, p. 104.
175 *Discourses*, no. 21, p. 104.
176 *Discourses*, no. 6, p. 35.
177 *Discourses*, no. 6, p. 35.
178 *Discourses*, no. 55, p. 209.

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179 *Geschichte der schönen Redekünste Persiens* (Vienna, 1818), p. 164.
180 *Divan*, 2733.
181 *Divan*, 1499.
182 *Mathnavi*, I. 112 (*Nicholson*, ii. p. 10).
183 *Divan*, 2674.
184 *Divan*, 3141; *Ruba'iyyat–E*, 323 b1.
185 *Divan*, 3073.
186 *Divan*, 2435.
187 *Divan*, 920. The frieze is depicted in Richard Ettinghausen, *The Unicorn* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1950), Plate 3.
188 *Divan*, 1331.
189 *Divan*, 471.
190 *Divan*, 1689.
191 *Divan*, 1067.

192 *Divan*, 2288.
193 *Divan*, 1125.
194 *Divan*, 2897.
195 *Mathnavi*, IV. 2348 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 402].
196 *Divan*, 684.
197 *Mathnavi*, I. 24 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 6].
198 *Divan*, 2236; 1599; 1329.
199 *Divan*, 3038; 2800.
200 *Divan*, 1826; 189; 1414.
201 *Divan*, 1100; 2120.
202 *Divan*, 2073; 1894; 1272.
203 *Divan*, 2400.
204 *Divan*, 565.
205 *Divan*, 1639.
206 *Mathnavi*, VI. 1804 [*Nicholson*, vi. pp. 358–9].
207 *Mathnavi*, II. 1529 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 300].
208 *Divan*, 683.
209 *Divan*, 2190.
210 *Mathnavi*, III. 3832 [*Nicholson*, iv. p. 215].
211 *Divan*, 1130.
212 *Divan*, 2601.
213 *Divan*, 355.
214 *Divan*, 1075.
215 *Divan*, 2948; 1824; *Mathnavi*, V. 1256 [*Nicholson*, vi. 76].
216 *Mathnavi*, I. 3056 [*Nicholson*, ii. 167].
217 William Hastie, *The Festival of Spring from the Divan of Jalâl ed-Dîn* (Glasgow, 1903), no. 6.

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218 *Mathnavi*, I. 135 [*Nicholson*, ii. p. 11, which differs much from the translation here].
219 *Discourses*, no. 26, p. 127.
220 *Mathnavi*, VI. 4023 [*Nicholson*, vi. pp. 480–1]; also: *Ruba'iyyat*, 1019; 643.

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Rumi (1207–1273), venerated as 'Mevlana' ('our master'), is the most famous exponent of the mystical tradition in Islam. The Mevlevi order of dervishes, celebrated for their ecstatic music and dance, was organized by Rumi's eldest son on the basis of his teachings. He spent most of his life in Konya in Rum (modern Anatolia), whence the name 'Rumi'. His longest work, the *Mathnavi*, has held its reputation in the eastern lands of the Islamic world as the most revered text after the Qur'an. Echoes of the Qur'an, and traces of Rumi's training as a jurist or *faqih*, are evident throughout his writings. Interest in Rumi in the West has recently evolved into something like a cult, which, as Schimmel argues, does not do justice to the spiritual passion and insights of Rumi's *Mathnavi* and *Divan*.

In this compact essay Schimmel sketches the major landmarks and influences in Rumi's life, his religious and cultural background, the dominant strands of imagery, and the range of tone and anecdote that animate his poetry. She explains why Rumi's work must be understood in the Persian literary and the Islamic religious traditions to which it belongs. It is through those traditions that Rumi experienced and expressed the Divine Love that peoples of all faiths immediately recognize and affirm. In the closing chapters Schimmel reviews modern scholarship and translations of Rumi's works, in West and East, and answers the question 'What does Rumi mean to us in the modern world?'

Annemarie Schimmel (1922–2003), author of over 50 books and numerous scholarly articles, was the leading authority on Islamic mysticism and literature in the Persian tradition. She published translations of Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Sindhi, and Pashto poetry, as well as critical studies of major Sufis like Rumi, and modern authors like Iqbal. Her first translations (to German) were of Rumi's *Di*[illegible]*ne* half a dozen books on Rumi, her most comprehensive[illegible]*rinted*) is *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jala*[illegible]*ork*, 1993).

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